# SATELLITES OF CALVARY

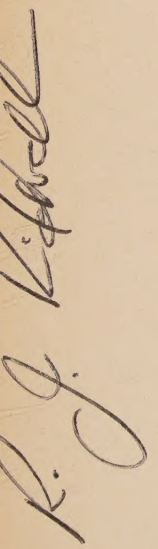
KING D. BEACH

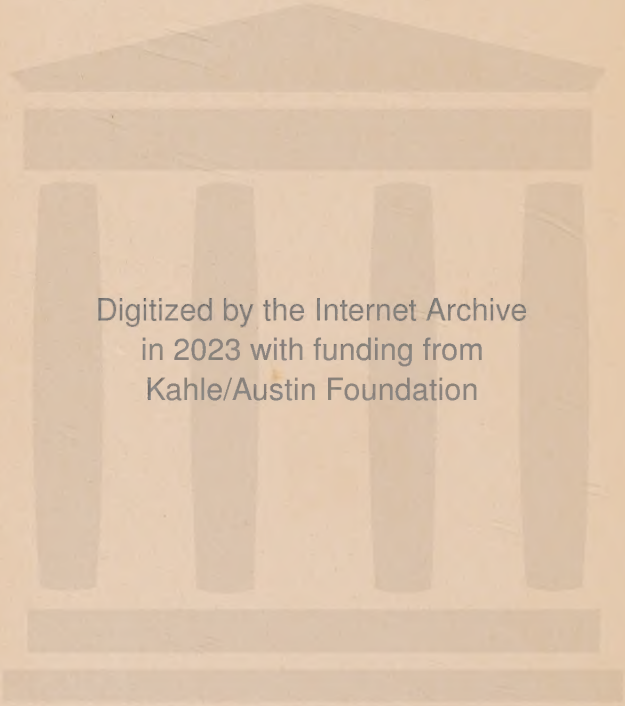
From the personal library of:

R. J. Kidwell

CINCINNATI
CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

G.M. Elliott Library
Cincinnati Christian University
2700 Glenway Ave
Cincinnati, OH 45204-3200





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/satellitesofcalv0000king

# SATELLITES OF CALVARY

KING D. BEACH

G.M. ELLIOTT LIBRARY
Cincinnati Christian University

THE ABINGDON PRESS
NEW YORK CINCINNATI CHICAGO

B 36525
1930

Copyright, 1930, by
KING D. BEACH

All rights reserved, including that of translation into
foreign languages, including the Scandinavian

The Bible text printed in this publication is taken from The American Standard Edition of the Revised Bible, copyright, 1929, by The International Council of Religious Education, and is used by permission

Printed in the United States of America

DEDICATED TO:

J. R. B. and E. A. B., parents crowned

G. E., a spiritual father

O. T. O., a friend tested

M. G. B., a companion royal

## CONTENTS


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| I. | Pontius Pilate | 7 |
| II. | Herod, The Tetrarch | 20 |
| III. | Pilate's Wife | 31 |
| IV. | Barabbas | 41 |
| V. | Joseph of Arimathæa | 51 |
| VI. | Simon, the Cyrenean | 63 |
| VII. | The Penitent Malefactor | 72 |
| VIII. | Judas Iscariot | 86 |
| IX. | The Apostles | 96 |
| X. | The Multitude | 111 |
| XI. | The Ecclesiastical and Political Leaders | 125 |
| XII. | The Roman Soldiers | 138 |
| XIII. | The Women Who Stood by the Cross | 152 |
| XIV. | The Central Sun—Its Surpassing Greatness | 165 |
| XV. | The Central Sun—Its Brilliance Shines From Gloom | 179 |

## CHAPTER I

## PONTIUS PILATE

It would have been a most discerning person who would have guessed at the time of the crucifixion that Pilate, the powerful Roman governor, was only a satellite of Jesus; that his place in the memory of man would be entirely due to his relationship to his peasant subject; that the record of the minutest move he made in the trial of Jesus would be treasured and pondered by multitudes for centuries, merely because it might reveal something about this prisoner; and that he and his whole career would be rigidly judged in accordance with his decision and attitudes in that apparently petty trial. The bright glory of Pilate was momentary, rapidly consuming itself in the atmosphere created by the Teacher; the hidden glory of Jesus has become manifest and has proved exhaustless and cumulative.

Pilate had power enough to save Jesus. It was no idle boast when he petulantly demanded of the silent prisoner, "Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee?" His authority as procurator was

supreme, except that as steward he was held to strict accountability for the interests of the emperor and the empire, that Roman citizens might appeal to the emperor against his rule, and that his subjects might protest to that same power. Roman governors ordinarily gave much latitude to local authorities, but they were not at all hesitant about overruling them when occasion seemed to demand.

Pilate, moreover, clearly desired to save Jesus. He was convinced that this Galilæan peasant was politically harmless, and that he was dishonestly and unfairly accused. Pilate had had eight years of contact with the leaders of the Hebrew people and knew enough of their desires and methods to realize that they hated Jesus partly because he had refused to lead a revolt against Rome and to establish an earthly kingdom, though this was one of the accusations they made against him.

Pilate's floundering devices for clearing his disconcerting prisoner show this desire. Repeatedly he affirms that he considers the charges groundless, and the prisoner guiltless. He cleverly appeals from the leaders, for months antagonistic to Jesus, to the crowd of common people who, up to this time, had been friendly to him. He suggests that Jesus be the prisoner chosen by the multitude to be released, as the custom was, at the Passover season. He attempts

to satisfy the anger of the crowd by letting them see their victim after he had been severely beaten and abused and was wearing the crown of thorns. He even attempts (rather childishly withal) to dramatize his opposition by publicly washing his hands of the sorry proceedings.

Although Pilate had power to halt this terrible injustice, and although he decidedly desired to do so, he did nothing more than bunglingly to delay the result. He appears more like a puppet than a Roman ruler. Why was this powerful governor putty rather than iron? How can we account for his tragic failure to prevent such a manifest miscarriage of justice?

He was grievously handicapped by the results of racial and class prejudice.

At the beginning of his governorship this prejudice had made serious trouble. Previous Roman governors, adopting a conciliatory policy, had ordered Roman soldiers to remove the figures of the emperor from their standards before they entered the sacred city of Jerusalem. The Jewish people were quickly sensitive at this point, as they considered that taking the images of the emperor within Jerusalem constituted sacrilege. But Pilate determined not to give way to what he thought was a senseless prejudice of a small-minded people. Why should he, he

reasoned, a Roman governor, take notice of such trifles? He ordered the soldiers to enter Jerusalem during the night, with the disputed figures on their standards. At once the whole country was aflame. Pilate was besieged in his palace in Cæsarea by a multitude of people pleading that this insult to their religion be removed. For five days the governor refused even to hear their appeal. On the sixth day he admitted the multitude to his presence, using the race course as an audience chamber on account of the great numbers; but, instead of permitting them to present their appeal, he surrounded them with soldiers and threatened them with death if they persisted in their importunity. The arrogant governor was now to learn something of the mettle of his recently acquired subjects. They cast themselves on the ground, declaring that they would rather die than acquiesce in such a sacrilege. Not daring to order a general massacre, Pilate ungraciously yielded.

Pilate's consciousness of his racial and class superiority is shown repeatedly in the trial of Jesus. Alone with the prisoner in the judgment chamber, the Roman asks, "Are you really the king of the Jews?" Jesus answers, "Are you asking this of your own accord, or did the Jews put that into your mind?" And then comes the supercilious answer in the form of another question, with a curl of the lip, "Am *I* a Jew?

How should *I* know anything about this?" He is in effect saying, "How would *I* be entangled in such small affairs except that some of your own race had made accusation against you?" A moment later when Pilate goes out from this private examination to the multitude and reports that he finds Jesus guilty of no crime, he suggests (according to John) that they choose Jesus to be released as his Passover boon. But Pilate does not disguise the sneer—"Do you will that I release unto you *The king of the Jews?*" ("What a King he is!") Perhaps that sneer had much more to do with the answer, "Not *that man*" than we have realized.

The play of animosity is clearly seen when the ecclesiastical leaders first bring their prisoner to Pilate for confirmation of their sentence. Pilate asks, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" Surlily demanding, without actually saying so, that he confirm their sentence without review, they say, "If this fellow were not a criminal, we would not have delivered him up to you."

Then Pilate, refusing to see the point, and forcing them to a hated admission, replies, "Take him yourselves, and sentence him according to your own law."

And they, swallowing their pride with as good grace as possible, admit, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

The placard placed on the cross by Pilate's order, "Jesus, the Nazarene, King of the Jews" is his final futile insult. "All you Jews—behold what kind of a king *you* have!" he is saying. "Compare your king, a criminal, crucified and naked, with a real king—a Roman emperor!"

This tension between governor and people made a fair trial impossible. Beneath a mask of courtesy, hatred was stabbing out like a poisoned fang. For the people, the trial was a battleground on which they were bitterly fighting to compel an arrogant governor to bend to their will. As for Pilate, he was dealing with a roused tiger, and being concerned mainly with keeping him in the cage, he was consenting to almost anything that promised peace. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the merits of the case were forgotten, and almost the prisoner himself.

Thus, racial prejudice and class hatred vitiated justice—and do so to-day. In all the world no more fertile causes of unfairness and despair exist.

This same prejudice prevented Pilate from finding new light and life in the presence of Jesus. Another Roman, the centurion of Capernaum, was in the presence of the Master much less time than Pilate, and yet he found life for his servant and for himself. In his pride of race and position the thought apparently never

occurred to Pilate that this poverty-stricken, lowly peasant from Galilee might be for him also the fountain of truth and strength.

In addition, as though one fatal wound were not enough, Pilate was the victim in this trial of his previous misgovernment. Back of the whole proceedings the Jews held the covert threat that they might carry the struggle up to the Roman emperor.

Probably Pilate was perfectly willing that this particular issue should be appealed to Rome. Roman sense of justice, rough as it sometimes was, would undoubtedly array opinion and decision clearly on his side. But if this issue should be taken to Rome, what else might emerge, and what else might be carried to Rome with it?

Roman rule at the time of Pilate and Tiberius had fallen on evil days. That cynical emperor is reported to have refused to appoint new governors in place of old ones, on the theory that sated flies do not suck as much blood from their victim as fresh flies! Yet even at this low period Pilate feared for himself should some of his acts become known at Rome. He had grievously abused his authority; he had been corrupt, insolent, cruel, and inhuman. One does not want a mob to carry a torch into a powder magazine even though there are no explosives in the par-

ticular room they propose to enter. Once in the powder magazine, there is no telling where they may go. Past misdeeds made a quiet settlement of this affair most desirable for the Roman governor.

Into what bondage former sins bring people! The Chinese put it, "He who rides on a tiger can never dismount." Eugene O'Neil, in "Emperor Jones," pictures that truth. A Negro Pullman conductor cuts the throat of a black friend after a crap game, splits the head of the prison guard with a shovel, escapes as a stowaway to Africa, and within two years becomes "Emperor Jones." He makes a tribe of "woods Negroes" his prey, builds his gaudy palace, struts in tinsel glory, robs the natives and grinds them with taxes. He plans to prey upon them as long as he can, and then to escape to his safely stored riches. But when the revolt comes, the past makes the emperor impotent. The terrifying specters of Jeff, his murdered companion, and of the prison guard, and of the abused Negroes who accepted him as emperor, require the bullets which might have saved his life, and ever faster and nearer comes the dreadful tom-tom of the war drum, until finally "the emperor" staggers into the clutches of his executioners. He cannot get away from his past misdeeds.

Into what dismal bondage, for instance, lies

bring people—it is so difficult for the liar to be certain to whom the lies were told, what were the embellishing details, and how present lies need to be dovetailed into past ones. How many people fail in present noble acts because they have forfeited the confidence and created the suspicions of people by past misdeeds!

And Pilate could not escape from the clutches of his former sins. Or, rather, he did not know that he could escape. He did not imagine that this strangely calm prisoner could break a Roman governor's bonds. Fear of vengeance for past wickedness prevented him from dealing justly with Jesus.

Pilate failed, too, because he had no noble objective. His impulses from within and the suggestions from without were not dominated by some mastering purpose; his life was not organized about some unselfish loyalty and affection. He had no earnest desire to do what was right and just. He wanted to be comfortable, to be undisturbed in the satisfaction of his appetites and greeds. Beyond that he saw little or nothing worth while.

Pilate is examining Jesus. "Are you honestly a king?"

"My realm," the Master answers, "does not belong to this world. This is why I came into the world, to bear testimony to the truth."

What folly this is to Pilate! "Truth," he says with tired and haughty depreciation. "What is truth?" and he leaves Jesus, without waiting for an answer. He is asking: "Who knows, after all, what truth is? Why should anyone be so simple as to be in earnest about anything? For what would anyone give life? What is this nebulous thing called justice? Why should anyone forfeit present comfort or endanger future prospects by trying, and probably failing, to protect a fanatic from the results of his own folly?" Many present-day political officials hesitate, like Pilate, to jeopardize their future by championing unpopular causes or friendless persons. And do preachers and churches present a particularly daring antithesis in this regard? We are adequate mainly when things are soft and easy and brave when there is no danger.

The "modern" cult of sophistication was old when Pilate was young. Enthusiasm for anything or anybody, except as they might minister to his comfort and enjoyment and prosperity, he considered an error in taste and in common sense. What the Puritans called a "concern" he considered barbarous, and anything in the realm of the spirit, silly. Outside of himself he had no goal.

Why, then, should Pilate be longer held in miserable Jerusalem? Why should he lose his pleasures, and endanger his interests by stand-

ing out for this obstinate Nazarene? Is it not all folly? If without any particular discomfort or danger he could show the obstinate leaders their place, and also gain the gratitude of the friends of this dreamy fellow, well and good; but when personal inconvenience and political complications loom—it is very different! Let Pilate conspicuously wash his hands of that affair!

Thus Pilate becomes a symbol of compromise and futility and failure. He failed miserably because he lacked, if we bring it all into one word, religion.

With Pilate and with us religion is necessary for visioning beyond the present and the personal, for choosing the best amid all the alternatives afforded by our opulent civilization, for judging in the light of eternity and in accordance with eternal values. It is necessary for answering questions which the mind of man is eternally asking and never completely solving, for attaining those answers which give purpose to this blundering, battering life. It is necessary for giving objective and meaning both to this universe and to our individual existence. It is necessary to satisfy the spiritual longing of man in worship, to give a worthy object for man's awe and dependence and contrition and helplessness. It is necessary to strengthen man for the grave

crises of sorrow and temptation, and for the monotonous difficulties of daily life—"to make *men* out of jellyfish."

Lacking all these benefits of religion, in the trial of Jesus, Pilate was a cork in a rapids, instead of a strong Roman governor.

Unfortunately, Pilate was neither the first nor the last person to fail distressingly and disastrously because he lacked religion. A recent biographer of Charles Darwin unfairly writes (and the statement is featured in the advertisement of the book), "He made hell a laughing-stock, heaven a dream, and God himself no more than an amiable possibility, if even that." It is tragically true that multitudes have lost faith in Christianity because of the popularization of scientific information; they fail to know enough science to realize its assumptions and its limitations. A big word, or one with a capital letter, is a sufficient substitute for thinking.

Secularism is also making multitudes think that religion is not needed and encouraging them to substitute movies for worship and "True Stories" for the Bible. Brilliant young "intellectuals," who are always shouting about their intellectual superiorities, in these particulars are pleading with us to be free of the anachronism of religion with its inhibitions and conventions. Some "big" business men, who patronize religion because they consider it to

be a "stabilizer," count themselves too big to give personal allegiance or effort to religion.

Multitudes to-day, like Pilate and the mob before the Prætorium, are failing miserably because they lack that essential, religion. They are "sheep without a shepherd."

## CHAPTER II

## HEROD, THE TETRARCH

Some stars which appear bright are composed of gas. Such was Herod Antipas. He would have been keenly disappointed if he had known that he was to be remembered only as a satellite of Calvary. He could not have begun to understand it. To him the one happy outcome of a flat event which had promised some excitement was that Pilate, his only rival in prominence in Jerusalem, took occasion to show him what he considered overdue and well-deserved deference.

Herod was tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa during the entire life and ministry of Jesus, having received these provinces from his father, Herod the Great, in 4 B. C. and holding them until 39 A. D. As tetrarch he was "a petty prince, dependent upon Rome for the retention of his few emblems of sovereignty." He was not, however, as immediately dependent upon the Roman emperor as Pilate was, Pilate being an appointed "procurator," or "steward," of the emperor's interests. Herod was secure in his inherited power and authority in his provinces so long as he maintained a steady flow of tax-

gold to Rome, upheld order, gave military aid, and maintained friendly relations with his jealous, unsocial, and suspicious Roman master.

Herod's capital at Tiberius (built by the tetrarch and named in honor of the unworthy emperor) was within fifteen miles of Nazareth, less than ten miles from Capernaum, the center of the Master's ministry, and was situated on the Sea of Galilee, about which so many events in the work of Jesus occurred. Since these two provinces extended at their greatest length less than one hundred and ten miles, and at their greatest width thirty miles, it would be expected that Herod and Jesus would have frequently met. We know, however, that they never saw one another until the day of the crucifixion.

So far as the records state, Jesus never entered Tiberius, the seat of Herod's government. In the building of this capital a burial ground had been uncovered and the site was declared unclean to Jews. No orthodox member of that race who entered the city could resume his activities without a purification process that required seven days. Herod had considerable difficulty in attracting inhabitants to Tiberius, and finally colonized it with a mixed population of dubious character. Jesus, largely limiting his ministry to the Jews, had little occasion to go to the city of Tiberius.

We are told that Herod, early in Jesus' career,

"sought to see him;" probably the more accurate translation is "continued seeking to see him." In the account of the Master's examination before Herod we read that the tetrarch "was of a long time desirous to see him." Very evidently, however, the ruler did not make any serious effort to realize his desire. If he had summoned Jesus to him, as he did John the Baptist, probably the Master would have gladly accepted the opportunity of declaring his message to him and his court. Herod could easily have located the Galilæan prophet and have gone to him. He was, however, too "busy here and there" with matters more important to him than interviewing a peasant prophet—building the stadium at Tiberius, and the fortress-palace at Machærus, involved in his envious intrigues against Agrippa, and in his private correspondence with the Emperor Tiberius, who valued his wily and corrupt confidences, selecting the tax-gatherer for Nazareth or Penuel, planning for his next banquet, which must outshine (and outvulgarize) all others.

Yet Herod had heard much of the Nazarene. We are told in Luke that Joan, the wife of Herod's steward, who managed his ruler's household and estates, was one of those envied women who, having "been healed of evil spirits and infirmities," "ministered" to the itinerant Jesus and his apostles "of their substance." We read in

Acts that Manaen, a "foster brother" of Herod, became either teacher or prophet in the early church at Antioch, and was therefore one of the first to be called a "Christian." There is some uncertainty as to how close a relation the word which has been translated "foster brother" indicates, but the term probably means that Manaen's mother was nurse to Herod. How strange to contemplate that of these two playmates, one became murderer of John the Baptist and scoffer at Jesus, his own harassed and threatened subject, and the other a Christian of prominence and authority in the early church! The influence of Jesus therefore entered even into Herod's household and friendships.

Frequent reports came to Herod about Jesus. We are told that he heard so much about Jesus that in consternation he insisted to his servants (indicating perhaps that the strange doings of the prophet were no new subject of conversation between this ruler and his servants), "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead." The Pharisees, moreover, came to Jesus one day warning him that Herod sought to put him to death. Jesus, measuring the tetrarch with the nicety of a diamond cutter, refused to be scared by "that fox" and asked the Pharisees to tell Herod that he had chosen his course, and that Herod with all his threats could not change it a hair's breadth.

Two episodes in the life of Herod suffice to lay bare his soul. The first is his relationship with Herodias. This fair profligate was not only the daughter of Herod's executed half brother, Aristobolus, but also the wife of his brother Philip. While Herod was the guest of his brother, who was living in Rome in wealthy retirement, he entered into an adulterous and incestuous intrigue with this ambitious woman. They both were quite modern in claiming "the right to love when and where they pleased." In spite of the dangers involved in the alienation of his lawful wife, who was the daughter of the powerful Arabian King Hareth, Herod carried out the plan and "married" Herodias.

The second revealing act of Herod is his treatment of John the Baptist. The contrast between this cruel, crafty, self-indulgent, ostentatious, shallow-hearted ruler, and the roughly clad, austere, abstemious, outspoken prophet of righteousness and repentance is startling. Herod was clearly impressed by John, hearing him "gladly," but when the fearless prophet dared to denounce the tetrarch to his face for his lustful infatuation with Herodias, Herod threw him into one of the loathsome, subterranean dungeons connected, perhaps, with his own palace. He had respect for his accuser, however, and intended to harm him no further, as we may judge from the statement in Mark, made after

the imprisonment, "for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe." Herodias, however, never forgave that terrifying rebuke, and was set on accomplishing John's death even though he was protected by her own husband. Soon Herod is self-trapped by his foolishness and sin. We all know the story—the birthday feast in the tetrarch's palace, the profligate dance of the royal princess (a descendant of the strict and honored family of the Maccabees) before the half-drunken king and guests, the witless and expansive promise, the horrible advice of an evil mother, the revolting request, the shuddering impotent regret of Herod, and the tragic death of a great soul. If Herod had had a genuine rather than a false courage, he would have refused to keep the rash and silly promise, but he was more anxious to be considered a good sport than a just ruler.

In passing judgment upon Herod Antipas, it should be remembered that he had a bad start. He was the son of a bad father.

His father was Herod the Great, the hated benefactor of Judæa. He made his country a first-rate kingdom, extending its borders beyond the limits Solomon knew. He was the most powerful king allied with Rome and was recognized as an important factor in imperial affairs.

He shared with Julius Cæsar the honor of having withstood the blandishments of the snaky enchantress of Egypt, Cleopatra, who all but wrecked the Roman Empire. He created a harbor for his country on the Mediterranean, sold the plate from his own table to provide food from Egypt for his people during a famine, magnificently built the Temple at Jerusalem (hoping to be acclaimed the promised Messiah!), enriched his country with public works, established security and prosperity. But he was hated by his own people as few rulers can be hated. As was said of Goethe, he required the services of two friends at once—one to weave laurels for his brow and another to clean dirt from his garments. Constantly he irritated the tender susceptibilities of the Hebrews by some brutal and frequently intentional disregard of their most cherished traditions. He was jealous, suspicious, cruel, and blood-thirsty. He caused two sons and a beloved but mistrusted wife to be put to death. He lived in a golden cage of misery, prodded incessantly by hating and hated subjects, and badgered by greedy schemers who made even his own house a den of fiends. When he was about to die, he ordered that upon his death the chiefs of the Jews be called together and massacred, in order that at his funeral some genuine sorrow might be manifest!

Herod Antipas, his son, was fortunate enough

to be sent away from his royal home for his schooling, but, inasmuch as he was sent to decadent Rome, the advantage was decidedly doubtful.

In addition to a profane home and evil parents, Herod Antipas was cursed with his wife, Herodias, a woman guilty of almost unrelieved wickedness, more filled with lust and hate and jealousy and greed than Herod himself.

Let parents and wife share with Herod his ignominy.

Herod, outwardly conforming to the religion of his subjects (he was part Jew), was in Jerusalem attending the Passover festival at the time of the death of Jesus. Pilate, with much relief and with suspicious haste, hurried Jesus to Herod, on the excuse that he was a Galilæan. So it came to pass that Jesus stood before this man Herod on trial for his life.

What an opportunity Herod had of redeeming his sordid career and record! His experience with John the Baptist, his considerable knowledge of Jesus, whom he classified with the slaughtered prophet of the wilderness, made it perfectly and immediately clear to him that his subject was innocent of the charges preferred, and should be instantly freed. In addition, Herod could be little harmed by the political or even the ecclesiastical leaders of Jerusalem.

He could laugh at their threats against him. Would he not even curry favor with his own people if he should rescue this prophet, who was yet popular in Galilee, from the blood-thirsty clutches of those they thought of as the arrogant and greedy priests and Pharisees of the great city? Would not such a rescue give the appearance of a daring nobility that would atone for his unwilling part in the death of John the Baptist?

With such an opportunity before him, what did Herod see? He saw first an occasion to satisfy his curiosity in beholding a miracle actually performed before his eyes. What a happy diversion for a jaded man unwillingly spending dull days in gloomy Jerusalem in order to please his religious subjects! Here was a chance to call his court favorites and his women, and display to them a miracle-worker more startling than they had ever dreamed about! The magician, he reasoned, would surely spread his full bag of tricks to save his life; and he had been credited even with bringing the dead to life! What spice to enliven the letter to Tiberius, and what a story to tell later in Rome!

Herod saw also a gesture of deference on the part of Pilate, with whom he had been in enmity, and gloated over it. "At last proud Pilate has come to his senses," Herod thought, "and recognizes that I am a man who must be taken into

consideration." His dignity thus easily salved, the two were made friends.

So Herod turned his pale, puffy face toward Jesus, rejoicing to see this worker of magic, and put many idle questions to him in garrulous delight. And the Master, so ready to help and so keen to see unexpected possibilities in the most unlikely people, answered him not one word! Herod wanted, not an enlightener, but an entertainer, and Jesus refused the rôle! In imperial dignity based not on pride and power, but on a clear realization of the greatness of his calling, he stood silent—helpless in body, supreme in spirit. A present day poet, William E. Brooks, has written:

"And so the Magic-worker comes at last!
Three years he's shown his wondrous might to men.
They say his touch has power, that fever flees
Before his fingers, even blind eyes see;
To-day perhaps he'll show that power to me.
Youth slips from me, my body's growing old,
Older than my years warrant. I have lived
With wine and song and merry Roman girls
And merry Roman boys in Cæsar's house,
And now I pay the price. Perhaps this man
Will touch me and will bring my youth again.
I'll try him, seek a sign, and then I'll draw
Him close beside me, offer him his freedom,
All he desires as well, if he will work
The miracle that brings me youth again.
He has his price, I'm sure, like any man.
Then Rome once more, while Cæsar stares agape
At my new strength—and nights of wine and song!
"He stood and looked and answered not a word.

But, oh! how deep he looked within my soul
Past places where I had not looked for years!
Such men as he and John would drive me mad;
And so he goes to Pilate—and his end."[1]

Herod, loose-mouthed in surprise and disappointment, took cheap revenge. Not merely handing over the Master to his brutal soldiers for coarse mockery, he shared in the scoffings! He clothed the Master of life and of men with burlesque glory and returned his plaything to Pilate.

In the opportunities of life Herod saw only self-glorification and sense gratification. It is as easily possible for us as it was for Herod to see the trivial and the mean rather than the big and the noble. There are people who search even our incomparable Bible for frank statements of sexual immorality, but pass by those heights of vision and faith so wondrously contained therein. There are those who see only the unpleasant and the ugly in the church, in preacher, in friends, in their family, in their daily work, in the community, failing to perceive the desirable and the beautiful, and to encourage folks in their nobler qualities and aspirations. Jesus warned his disciples and warns us against "the leaven of Herod"—the trivial spirit that makes a joke of the most sacred issues of life, the unclean spirit that sees and magnifies and gloats over the dross.

[1] Reprinted by courtesy of the author.

## CHAPTER III

## PILATE'S WIFE

At the time of these events, Pilate's wife was the satellite of a satellite, like the moon of our earth. She is now by far the brighter of the two bodies. If her courageous course had been followed, both she and Pilate would shine to-day in purer luster.

Almost a Prussian submission to law and authority existed among the Romans. Seldom would a Roman man think of interfering with court processes, and even less seldom would a Roman woman give opinion concerning legal procedure, or make suggestion regarding it. We of to-day are better accustomed than the Romans to what used to be called "petticoat rule." When Pilate's wife, therefore, sent the Roman governor advice about Jesus, requesting, "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man," she did something much more unusual and bold than we, who have slighter regard for authority and a different view of woman's position, might at first realize. The statement that she sent the message to Pilate "while he was sitting on the judgment seat" emphasizes her unusual daring.

Pilate was by no means the type of man to

whom one would presume to give gratuitous advice. He was prejudiced and revengeful. He was hair-trigger quick in decision and severe in penalty. The placard that he peevishly insisted should be placed above the cross—"This is Jesus, the King of the Jews"—was an insult to the people of Jerusalem so valueless and futile that it reveals the petty petulance of the governor.

May we not judge that the kind of woman who would continue to be Pilate's wife would not ordinarily be interested in matters of governmental routine? In a day of easy divorce a wife who did not fit into Pilate's pagan standards and desires would not long maintain her place. She would need to be physically appealing, diverting and decorative—a type that would reflect credit upon Pilate, testifying to his discrimination in selection and to his success in attainment. Her main concern in life would be to keep firm hold on Pilate, and she would instinctively avoid meddling in what he would consider his manly prerogatives.

The words of her message, "I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him," sounds like the querulous whine of a pampered woman. Her nobler motives were strangely mixed with selfish ones. Jesus was to her "that righteous man" unjustly charged and in danger of life. Yet what troubled her primarily was not that a good man was unjustly

suffering all these indignities and dangers, but that she had been disturbed by a dream about him. She seems almost to blame Jesus because she had had a bad dream about him! Pilate must deal with this prisoner in such a way that his wife will never again be thus disturbed. She is less interested in dealing fairly with this good man and in the maintenance of justice than in having Pilate avoid responsibility for anything that might cause his wife's morning siesta to be haunted by revengeful dreams.

This dream of Pilate's wife may have much back of it. When we understand dreams better perhaps we may find a key that unlocks some of the hidden mysteries of consciousness and personality.

We do know some things about dreams. In them, judgment and reason and conscience and desire-to-conform, the usual mental controls, are asleep. Memory and imagination join hands in a play spell unrestrained by the usual nurse maids and school-teachers. And, as these two play in easy abandon, hidden fears and forgotten hopes sometimes join in the games. What we most truly are, what we most deeply believe and hope for but perhaps refuse to admit even to ourselves, may come to the surface in dreams, frequently in fantastic forms, when the usual guardians are drugged.

We may reasonably conclude, therefore, that Pilate's wife had been deeply interested in Jesus. Probably it is too much to assume that she had seen him or heard him, though it is possible that from the edge of a crowd, listening to the words of life, she had caught the thrilling sound of his voice, had heard a few deep-plowing words, and had seen the disturbing calmness of his face. But, separated from her kin and friends, without modern methods for "killing time," probably unable to read, Pilate's wife had time and ear for all the news of the day. The little Jewish maid who prepared her bath and assisted at her toilet, the sly old merchant who sold jewels and told tales out of school, the dressmaker and hairdresser with their familiar stories, the garrulous household servants and stewards and officials, all brought welcome news. What strange tales they brought time and again of this uncharted Galilæan—fragments of his disconcerting sayings, accounts of his startling and wonderful doings. In some way he was unaccountably attractive to her. She adroitly and guardedly turned the conversation to news about him, grasping every crumb of information and hoarding it in her memory. The very contrast that he offered to all she was and knew made the appeal greater—he who was so disinterested in all that she had to offer a man, he who so stirred interests and hopes that she had

not dreamed existed in herself or in others. And now when the Nazarene was on trial before Pilate, her husband, all these hopes and fears, these dreads and longings emerged in a harrowing dream.

Are we disturbed by Jesus to such an extent that he comes to us in our dreams? Is he so much a part of our deepest self, so potent a factor in our fondest aspirations, that his figure sometimes stalks through our unconscious hours?

Pilate's wife may depict to us, though on a low level, the steadying influence of a wife with a husband, or of a husband with a wife. In times of indecision, when compromise and cowardice allure, how great the value when the companion of the years urges the path of highest duty! Perhaps the wife's appeal would have had more weight with Pilate if it had been on a higher plane; but, perhaps again, it was as high an appeal as she was capable of making and he of understanding. We may be sure, however, that with a woman's quick intuition she had seen that this man was no ordinary prisoner and that the future of Pilate and herself would be bound up with the fate of Jesus.

A woman's intuition is not some sixth sense. It is the ability to catch the significance of a chance inflection or of an unguarded sentence,

which tells more than the speaker intended, or to realize the meaning of gesture of hand or posture of body, or of look of eye which may speak more or even differently than the tongue. A woman is less analytical than a man, but more observant. Consequently, Pilate's wife caught more clearly than he the portents of the hour. To Pilate the case against Jesus was a troublesome matter, promising a crop of inconveniences because of the bullheadedness of the ecclesiastical and political leaders of his day, something to be gotten out of the way as quickly and as safely as possible. But there comes to him the unusual and disconcerting appeal of his wife, received even while he was on the tribunal, pleading with him to have nothing to do with injuring this good man.

How much it means when in marriage the best in husband and wife joins hands against all that is belittling in both! How wonderful if that helpfulness becomes the constant habit rather than the unusual event! How despoiling if either husband or wife encourages the worst in the other!

In this day the value of this partnership in the development of highest personalities may well be stressed.

I am preserving two letters, recently received from a husband and wife whom I united in marriage fourteen years ago. Life has not dealt

kindly with them. Their longed-for baby came, and died within a few hours. The husband began to fail in strength, a careless physician made superficial examinations and suggestions, daily toil brought continued exposure, and tuberculosis was heavily intrenched. Total loss of the breadwinner's income was faced, and the necessity of complete rest, change of climate and expert care. The two lovers set themselves to the grim task. They gleaned from every source available information about the dread threat. The wife became wage-earner by day; nurse, masseuse, dietitian, scrub-woman, and entertainer by night. Physicians said more than once that death could not be averted beyond a few days. Yet the two fought on. The husband finally dared attempt an entirely new line of work, first for an hour a day, then two hours, and now six hours. The two are over the crest of the hill in their long, wearying pull together. And the letter that each wrote to their preacher friend who had introduced them and counseled them and married them, hurrahed for them in their battle, wept with them and prayed for them, was just a love letter for the other, a love letter written to a third person. Neither of them could find words to express the greatness of soul and fullness of happiness that had come to them in the joyful sorrow of their life together. Is there anything in life more glorious?

A good mother lay dying, her body, always tiny, wasted by illness. Her preacher husband had preceded her through the deep valley many years before. Sometimes in her fitful moments of consciousness she seemed afraid, but her daughter, who had cared for her as tenderly as though she were a little babe, stroked her head and calmed her disturbance by saying, "You're all right, mother. Besse is here. Mary is here. King is here. We are all here, and you need not be afraid." Then, not once but several times, the mother murmured faintly, "Yes, and daddy is here too." Fourteen years gone and yet the closest of her dear ones in banishing fear through the last journey!

To revert to Pilate and his wife. How much these two were interested in Jesus, disturbed by him and attracted to him! And they were stark pagans. All their interests and instincts ran counter to him. Wealth and prominence were violently arrayed against him—the learning and dignity of the temple, the authority and order of the Roman Empire, the business interests of the city, the social and pleasure life both of Jerusalem and of Rome. Yet, in spite of the vast gulf separating them, Jesus had an undefined, unacknowledged appeal. If the appeal was stifled and ignored during wakefulness, it reappeared in dreams.

Legends tell us that Pilate's dead body was thrown into the Tiber River, where it so disturbed the water that violent storms arose and continued until the troublesome body was found and removed. The same experience was repeated in the Rhone River, whereupon the body was carried into the heart of the Alps, and thrown into a lonely tarn far up the rugged slope of Pilatus—that giant pyramid of stone that rises in front of glorious Lucerne sheer out of the blue of the Vierwaldstätter-See. When there is a heavy storm on that mountain, the natives yet say, "Pilate is washing his hands again." Pilate has not yet cleansed his hands of those stains, nor escaped from his prisoner!

If only we can bring to people, all sorts of people, this disturbing, attracting Jesus! I once heard Roswell Bates, heroic pastor of the Spring Street Presbyterian Church, in New York City, who died altogether too early, tell of an old woman who lived near his slum church, and who hated him and his work. She was a leader in the community, violently opposing his efforts to bring light into a darkened and fouled section. Many plans were laid to thaw her frozen heart, but all failed. Under sudden impulse, this preacher one day threw a handful of pebbles against the window of her alley apartment. With an angry crash the window was thrown up and a frowzy head was

stuck out. She demanded, "What are you throwing against my window?"

"Just some flowers for you. Let down a string and I will tie them on for you." The old woman became a leader in the work of the church. A caller later was shown the little bunch of flowers pressed in a book. She could resist argument and invitations, but she could not resist one Christ-like act which revealed the spirit of the Master.

Would that we also, by our Christlikeness, could better lift Jesus, strangely appealing and potently disturbing, into the lives of men! Then, like Pilate and his wife, the most unlikely ones would sense his attractiveness.

## CHAPTER IV

## BARABBAS

Barabbas would have been as surprised as Herod, though for totally different reasons, if he had known that by an entirely unforeseen and dramatic event he would be torn from his wandering career which had apparently come to complete collapse, and made into a satellite of Jesus. The memory of mankind is exceedingly short. Within three generations, the names of most of us will be blotted out of human consciousness and record. But the name of Barabbas continues, and forty generations after his birth we scan every syllable that tells of Barabbas—and why? For the suggestion that it may give regarding the central Man of history.

Barabbas has particularly appealed to the imagination of people. Like Pilate, he has been the subject of poems, plays, legends, and novels. He is pictured in the Gospels in outline sketch, a few bold strokes in suggestive words constituting our information of his stormy life. He is called an insurrectionist, a murderer, a thief, and a notable prisoner.

As an insurrectionist, he might be clothed with dignity and worth. Judas Maccabæus, who

two centuries previously had led in Palestine a glorious revolt against Rome, is counted one of the heroes of the world. Roman rule at this time was so corrupt and so cruel that much credit belongs to a man foolhardy enough to rise against it. There are times when even "Rev." ought to stand for "Revolutionist."

But when the Gospel narrators call Barabbas a murderer and a thief as well as an insurrectionist, the glamour fades. Probably the insurrection Barabbas instigated was little more than the looting of homes by a bold band of gangsters, of a type which city folks know too well. The opposition to Roman rule among the Jews was so keen, however, that the people tended to exalt anyone who made trouble for the Roman officials, even on a vulgar plane, into a popular favorite and a temporary hero.

Barabbas, then, was probably an ancient gangster, not hesitating at thieving and even murder, who had caught the popular eye and approval because of the trouble he made for the Roman officials. At the time of the trial of Jesus he had been captured and was in prison, loaded with chains.

It was Pilate's custom, somewhat relieving the stiff tension of Roman rule and currying favor with the multitude, to release from prison, at each Passover, some Jew in Roman custody. The one to be released was chosen by the multi-

tude. During the trial of Jesus, Pilate realized that it was the ecclesiastical and political leaders of the Jews who were determined to bring this strange prophet to his unmerited death. With much adroitness, therefore, while these leaders were continuing to make their accusations against Jesus before him, he suddenly appealed directly to the multitude and asked if they did not choose Jesus to be released from custody. (Mark states and Luke indicates that the crowd asked first for their usual boon. If so, that gave Pilate even a better opportunity for suggesting that Jesus be the one released.) The governor knew the popularity of the Nazarene with the common people who "heard him gladly." His appeal to the people over the heads of the scribes and Pharisees, coming unexpectedly, threatened to ruin the plans of the Jewish leaders.

Perhaps this scheme would have succeeded but for an interruption designed to help the harassed Jesus. The messenger from Pilate's wife came to the governor at this moment, according to the Gospel of Matthew, and, temporarily distracting him, gave opportunity for the scribes and Pharisees to leave the platform, where they were arguing with Pilate, to mingle with the multitude, and, thinking quickly and cleverly, to suggest to the people that they ask instead for the release of Barabbas. The multi-

tude, grossly disappointed with this dreamy idealist, whom they had but five days before accepted as their Messiah, turned to Barabbas, the daring realist who had challenged, even though foolishly and brutally, the rule of Rome. With a clear choice between Barabbas and Jesus, the multitude chose Barabbas, the insurrectionist, the murderer, the common thief.

The Master was on a raised platform from which he could see the multitude in their fateful decision. Undoubtedly, he could recognize people who were once his disciples, and could pick out others whose homes he had reunited, or whose bodies he had healed. With eyes made even keener than usual by crisis, he understood the play of emotion on their faces when Pilate unexpectedly appealed to them, and made them not only spectators of a breath-taking trial, but active participants. He noted the diversion of Pilate's attention, the hasty consultation of the surprised Jewish leaders, their quick use of the interruption to scatter through the multitude, their catchy suggestion of Barabbas, the conflict written on the faces of the people, the occasional and then the increasing calls for Barabbas, drowning out the first calls for Jesus. All this he saw and understood, though he spoke not.

To be rejected in favor of Barabbas—a murderer, a common thief, a gangster! To be

rejected by the very folks for whom he had striven so faithfully and so sacrificially! To be rejected by the very ones for whom he was facing death and the cross, that they might better know the heart of God! In the Tate Gallery in London is a painting entitled "Fate," representing a glorious bird upon which a leopard has sprung, crushing it to earth, a passing tid-bit for a ferocious animal. Thus might Jesus seem to be in the grip of the bloodthirsty multitude.

Yet there was no bitterness in the soul of Jesus. The battle had been fought long ago and won and rewon. Life is most bitterly denounced not by the deepest sufferers, but by those who desire for themselves a selfish paradise and find it not.

The ecclesiastical and political leaders had no pleasure in Barabbas. He was only the less troublesome of two disturbers—but the overbold man of action would be much easier to handle in the future than this other man of devastating ideas, who threatened their prerogatives, their influence, and their vested interests.

It would be easy to let our imagination fly in thinking of the attitude of these leaders in this choice of Barabbas rather than of Jesus. Their initial consternation at the ruse of Pilate, their quick-witted counter suggestion of Barabbas, the

rubbing of hands in delight as the plan worked, the congratulations offered to the man who hit upon the idea, the gloating memory of a dangerous situation well met, the satisfaction in outmaneuvering Pilate, the hotly rejected recurring suggestion that perhaps they had been wrong—all of this might well be meditated.

Seldom do people have moral discrimination quickly to see wrong in what has been for them a successful plan. May we not hope that gradually these leaders came to regret their part in exalting Barabbas above Jesus? It is improbable, however, that they ever admitted it.

Barabbas was in prison, "lying bound," according to Mark, probably loaded with chains. Ancient prisons were pest holes of filth, darkness, thirst, hunger, and lonesomeness. We need not be surprised that in a cruel day people had no conscience about prisons and prisoners; we should be greatly disturbed that in our day many people likewise have little such interest or conscience. Cells six and a half feet deep, four and a half feet wide and seven and a half feet high, without ventilation except through bars opening on a thick-aired corridor, without sanitary provisions, alive with vermin; guards untrained—made cruel by fear and associations; inhuman punishments; overcrowding, uncleanness, repressions, injustices, idleness, evil asso-

ciates are all much larger factors in the making of habitual criminals than we admit. We need a new John Howard in these United States. Will Christ say of us, "I was . . . in prison, and ye visited me not"?

The fiery, hostile soul of caged Barabbas had burned in hopeless rage, until hours of the day, and perhaps even seasons, were forgotten. He notes dully that the prison doors are opened, that voices sound from a distance; but he is not interested, thinking only that another helpless victim is to be thrown into a living hell. The torch and the voices come nearer and finally stop before uncomprehending Barabbas. Soldiers arouse him with unexpected gentleness, strike off his chains and rush him out of prison into Pilate's presence. He blinks bewildered eyes as he sees the multitude, and listens uncomprehendingly to words announcing that he is free.

Perhaps, in his surging joy at unexpected liberation, Barabbas does not stop to consider the cause of deliverance, accepting it joyously without thought.

But did he not see that strange Man, stranger even than himself with his matted hair, prison pallor and filth, who also stood before the multitude and before Pilate? Doubtless the cheers that greeted Barabbas were mixed with maledictions hurled at this inexplicable figure so weak and yet so strong, so gentle and yet so

stalwart. William E. Brooks, previously quoted, has put these words into the mouth of Barabbas:

"By what strange whimsies is a man's fate swayed—
I free to go, while he goes to his cross!
I know his life; no evil has he done;
For many a day in towns of Galilee,
Have I stood in that crowd that swarmed him 'round
While his fingers healed the leper with their touch,
Or at his word the devils fled away.
And men know my life, all my evil fame—
Now I stand free while he goes there to die!
What was there to this man that Annas feared,
And that dull Roman with his oily face?
He would be king? Nay, rather he would not!
Such men as he would never bind with crowns
And all the stiff seclusion of a throne
Their right to mix with men. Some deeper thought
Lay in that false priest's brain. Could it have been
He feared the words he spake about High God,
About men grown to stature of God's sons,
One brotherhood that banished self from earth?
No priest could gull a race that held such thoughts,
Nor was there place for Pilate in such plan,
Nor for Barabbas! No wonder Annas feared
A world he could not mold for his own gain.
And does he think to end him with a cross?"[1]

Probably the multitude thought little about their choice at first. Some of them had heard Jesus and had been unaccountably stirred by him, some had benefited by his kindnesses, all had been keenly interested in his dumbfounding ways and teachings; but now they were wearied by him and alienated by his dreamy inability to

[1] Reprinted by permission of the author.

offer any tangible benefits. They could not understand him, with his talk about a kingdom that was not of this earth. They could understand Barabbas with his program of direct action. They were ducks who had hatched an eagle, who wondered and sputtered and hated because he was not earthbound like themselves. The Teacher's ships were of too deep a draught for their shallow minds.

Few people look beyond the immediate. Elizabeth Coatsworth sings:

"To think that I once saw grocery shops
With but a casual eye,
And fingered figs and apricots
As one who came to buy.

"To think I never dreamed of how
Bananas sway in rain,
And often look at oranges
But never thought of Spain.

"And in those wasted days I saw
No sails above the tea,
For grocery shops were grocery shops—
Not hemispheres to me."[1]

Most of us to-day, as well as in the day of Jesus, fail to see "the sails above the tea," and fail to know that "grocery shops" are "hemispheres" bringing the labor of the world to us. Likewise the thoughtless multitude doubtless comprehended little during the trial.

But, in time, many of them began to ponder, to wonder, to understand and to regret. They

[1] Reprinted by courtesy of the author.

began to realize the superiority of the One who loved them over the one who flattered and exploited them. They did not want to see Barabbas again, or to hear of him. Nobody wanted him about. After his strange moment of acclaim, he was forgotten when possible, and despised when remembered. The very Pharisees resented the presumption of his presence. To them he was a means to a nefarious end—like the bootlegger martyrs are to our daily press. They soon transferred what shame they had from themselves to him, and, after they had used him, would have naught of him. Surely, all must have soon ceased to boast of any part they had in the ignoble proceeding, tried to forget it, resented any reference to it, and increasingly wondered how they could have so forgotten themselves.

How could the people have made such a choice? How can we make it! Continually we choose between Christ and Barabbas, between the high and the low, the courteous and the boorish, the selfish and the sacrificial, the angry spirit and the forgiving, the popular and the right, the spectacular and the solid, the expedient and the solution, the pretense and the real, the temporal and the eternal.

Barabbas or Jesus, the Master, and the Saviour—which is your constant choice?

## CHAPTER V

## JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA

Joseph of Arimathæa steps into the scene at the darkest hour of human history. He is of noble bearing, reputation, and influence; he is generous, just, religious.

What had been his connection with Arimathæa (a place not identified) we do not know. That he was a resident of Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion we may be sure, inasmuch as he had provided there for his burial and inasmuch as he was a member of the Jewish Council in Jerusalem—the Sanhedrin.

In flagrantly illegal and unjust proceedings, the Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus to death. We are definitely told, however, that Joseph had not voted for the nefarious deed. Since we are also told that the vote condemning Jesus to death was unanimous, we know that Joseph was not present at the conclusion of the trial, and probably not at any part of it. He may have been detained by accident, or sickness, or perhaps by a determination not to share in objectionable proceedings which he was impotent to stay.

There is an ugly possibility, however, that



G.M. ELLIOTT LIBRARY
Cincinnati Christian University

Joseph remained away from the trial fearing that he might be led into a damaging avowal of his own relationship to the harassed prophet. The statement in the Gospel of John that he was a disciple of Jesus, but "secretly for fear of the Jews," lends probability to this possibility. Whatever light this statement may or may not shed upon Joseph's absence from the trial, it clearly places him in the unenvied class of those who, though they believed in Jesus and loved him, refused to acknowledge him. To be sure, Joseph had much to lose by such an acknowledgment—much more than most of the disciples. The wrath of the governing group upon one of their own number who had become a follower of the Nazarene would have been intense. They would have branded him a deserter and even a traitor. Even so, this cowardice seems most unlovely.

This unpromising conduct provides a dark background against which looms in clear outline the shining boldness of Joseph's request for the body of his previously unconfessed Master. According to Roman custom, the body might be left indefinitely on the cross—a warning to all who shudderingly passed by; according to Jewish custom it might be cast into a pit of refuse.

The appeal of a relative for the body would have excited no suspicion; but the request of a

distinguished and prominent Jew, one who was an honored member of the very body which had so gladly condemned Jesus to die and had so persistently hounded him to his death, marked him publicly a partisan of the crucified. Even if he could have made his appeal to Pilate in private, he could not have kept secret his responsibility for the removal of the body from the cross and for the burial. A more direct avowal of love and sympathy for the apparently discredited Messiah could not have been made. The rabbit became a lion.

A disastrous crisis may be a benediction to a cause. It may purge it of hangers-on, who, thinking of selfish gain, load down a popular movement, and leave only those who believe in the cause profoundly and sacrificially. It may, as it did to Peter and to other apostles, reveal disconcertingly to followers their own weaknesses and cowardices, and create that humility and that dependence upon God which multiplies usefulness. It may also, as this crisis did to Joseph of Arimathæa, overcome the timidity of valiant but quiet souls, and push them out into the center of the battle. It may help a man, as it helped Joseph, to forget questions of policy, to disregard results, to do what needs to be done without consideration of consequence. It is an epoch in a man's life when he chooses to do

something that is pleasing to God in the face of resulting and impending disaster; when he comprehends the genuine values so keenly and so sturdily that he chooses to lose what many count the most precious possessions in the world, that he may gain intangible but eternal verities. Joseph shows the glowing spirit of those three Hebrew youths who explained to Nebuchadnezzar that it was no mistake that they had not fallen down to worship the golden image, and who declared, "If it be *so,* our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; . . . *but if not,* be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

There is no greater need of the Christian Church to-day than a holy abandon to Christ and his kingdom, an heroic refusal to count the cost when unpopular causes need to be championed and generous services rendered. Questions of policy are altogether too much in our consciousness and deliberations. Too much of our "service" is suggestive of the bell-hop with his extended hand. We are too fearful that some outspoken words may alienate members or frighten away money or cause criticism. Christ's words "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" are fully as true of his church as of his followers. The church needs daredevils—and

be assured that there will be sufficient caution about to hold them within bounds! The individual Christian needs the same spirit. A certain young woman when she had performed some extravagantly generous deed used to say, "Well, when I get to the poorhouse, I'll have something exciting to talk about to the old ladies anyway!" May it require no tragedy, as it did for Joseph of Arimathæa, to make us bold and drastic and unhesitant and adventurous for Christ.

There are men whom you are surest to find by your side when the battle is hottest, the weariness most intolerable, the desertions most dangerous, the outcome most uncertain. Joseph of Arimathæa was that kind of a man. His deed, as Blake sings, "Stretches out my golden wings." There is doubtless much more latent heroism in mankind than we realize or that mechanized city life gives opportunity to reveal. When volunteers were called in the World War, mechanics and butchers and elevator operators and hucksters and garbage collectors flocked into the army, responding to an appeal that might easily cost life, and betraying a sacrificial spirit that hitherto was unsuggested. There is no waste anything like as disastrous as the waste of latent spiritual capacities stifled in an economic and social life which gives insufficient oppor-

tunity for expression and development. If the church can provide that opportunity so desperately needed, its ministration will be peculiarly opportune.

It seems rather strange that Joseph was not earlier aroused to proclaim his discipleship, and that the indignities heaped upon Jesus and his sufferings on the cross did not force Joseph to cry out in passionate, even if powerless, protest. What was there about the lifeless body upon the cross, the apparently complete defeat of the Messiah's mission, to call forth the courage which had slept through all these other arousing events? Perhaps, up to this time, Joseph had continued to hope that the Master would yet prove himself the Christ of God and destroy his enemies. Perhaps only as the lifeless body hung limp on the cross did he completely realize that the Christ needed him and required something that he must provide. Perhaps the culminative influence of all these terrible experiences was necessary to make a hero out of a coward.

It is significant that Joseph, though rich, was not content to hire someone to perform those last sad and sacred rites upon the Master's body. To give one's self is much better than to give one's money, though to give both is best. But

the money without the self is dross. There are some privileges which a loving heart cannot delegate—a mother's good-night kiss, a friend's word of comfort or of congratulation, a lover's remembrance; this is a thought to be emphasized in a day of coded telegrams of love, greeting-card salutations, form letters, and card-indexed sympathies. We must take time to be kind. Likewise, there are some expressions of love to Jesus which must be personal—our prayer, our interest in fellow Christians, our desire that others know of him, our participation daily in the advancement of his kingdom. No faithfulness of others can express the welling gratitude of our own being to our crucified Saviour, or fulfill our happy responsibility in carrying on his work.

And yet there is a sadness connected with this noble act of a noble soul.

Nicodemus, who had previously come to Jesus by night, but who also, apparently, had never openly acknowledged him, joined with Joseph to prepare the body of Jesus for burial. The two provided one hundred pounds of spices to embalm the precious body when ten pounds would have been abundantly sufficient for the sad purpose. Why were one hundred pounds furnished? In a paroxysm of affection, they were trying to make amends for what had been

lacking in their former devotion. By providing for the lifeless body many times what was needed, they pathetically sought to make up for lost opportunities of expressing their love to their lonesome Master.

How much Joseph and Nicodemus had lost during these cowardly months!

They had lost the inspiration of frequent association with Jesus and his disciples. Their clandestine visits and second-hand information provided only a suggestion of the help that open and frequent contact with the Master and frank association with other disciples could have provided. For development in anything we need the inspiration of contact with others like-minded. A woman living in a damp, dark cellar room of Philadelphia was given work and living quarters in a delightful country town. She was back in her cellar in two weeks and explained: "There wasn't a bit of amoosement up there. Why, here I can see at least one fight a day." She missed the presence of her kind! What Christians Joseph and Nicodemus might have become if they had not been afraid to listen to those words of wisdom from the Master, to bask in the light of his life-giving presence, to counsel with Peter and John and Andrew!

They had lost the opportunity of transforming their pride from an enemy of the best into an ally of the best. Their pride of position, their

desire to retain the honors and the powers that were theirs, had kept them from serving their secretly honored Master. Had they made a public declaration of their new allegiance, their pride would have turned to an honest self-respect that would have urged them to be faithful and loyal to their chosen Lord. Several years ago a man in Kentucky, determined to abstain from intoxicating liquors, published a paid advertisement in the local newspaper, which ran as follows: "Swears off —Realizing that the days of man are few and full of trouble, and that the clean, moral, sober life is best for all, I hereby solemnly swear, before God and man, that I will never again during the years 1914 and 1915, take a drink of intoxicating liquors." That man knew how to put his pride on the right side!

They had lost the freedom of the stalwart. An open and firm declaration of one's choice of the Master saves one from many evil suggestions and temptations. Two young men, both Freshmen in a certain university, were residents of the same dormitory. One complained bitterly that he was continually being asked to join drinking and gambling parties. The other stated that he did not even know that any such parties were held. What was the cause of such a contrast? One of the youths sought the reputation of being a "good sport," the other

unostentatiously but clearly allied himself with the Christians. One was invited to participate in all the lawlessness of the campus; the other was never thought of in connection with such plans.

They had lost the joy of open participation in the Messiah's work. What disaster it was for Joseph and Nicodemus, with hearts glowing with new love, with minds kindled by thrilling thoughts, and with imaginations fired by wonderful expectation, to say nothing and to do nothing without first making sure that they would create no suspicion of their interest in the Nazarene, the source and center of their new life! A mockingbird must refuse to sing, a star to shine, a rainbow to show color! Surely, the attempt to be secret about Christian choice and experience is well-nigh impossible if devotion be deep and love mastering; and if ever possible, it would be most destructive of usefulness and character. Love long stifled is killed; talents long unused are lost; loyalty unacknowledged is corrupted; ideas uncommunicated are throttled.

They had lost the satisfaction and the pleasure of helping their Christ. With their wealth and comforts, their influence and their position, how these two might have saved Jesus from weariness and difficulties, and what doors of opportunity they might have opened to him! Surely,

however faithful Joseph and Nicodemus may have been afterward, and however much Joseph may have accomplished according to the fantastic legends of the Holy Grail, they must have been the victims of malicious memories, memories recalling failures to help their Master.

One may rejoice in the heroic act of a noble man who clearly takes the side of an apparently discredited leader and a lost cause, while continuing to regret that so many months of development and of usefulness had been lost. How much better, too, if all who attempt to be Christians in secret would make clearly the glad avowal of their allegiance to the Master of life and of men! With so much to do, and so heavy a debt of gratitude to pay, who can be content to lose a day's work for the Master?

"If I had been in Palestine
A poor disciple I had been.
I had not risked or purse or limb
All to forsake, and follow Him.

"But with the vast and wondering throng
I too had stood and listened long;
I too had felt my spirit stirred
When the Beatitudes I heard.

"With the glad crowd that sang the psalm,
I too had sung, and strewed the palm;
Then slunk away in dastard shame
When the High Priest denounced His name.

"But when my late companions cried
'Away! Let him be crucified!'
I would have begged, with tremulous
Pale lips, 'Release Him unto us!'

"Beside the cross when Mary prayed
A great way off I too had stayed;
Not even in that hour had dared,
And for my dying Lord declared,

"But beat upon my craven breast,
And loathed my coward heart, at least,
To think my life I dared not stake
And beard the Romans for His sake."[1]

[1] Sara N. Cleghorn. Reprinted by permission of The Frank A. Munsey Company, owners of copyright.

## CHAPTER VI

## SIMON, THE CYRENEAN

A SATELLITE, floating easily in a narrow orbit, suddenly and ruthlessly torn from its track and, at first, unwillingly hurled into the circle of an unknown sun—that is Simon the Cyrenean. He is, moreover, like some of the planets, the subject of many speculations, some ill founded and of little exact information.

Countee Cullen, brilliant poet of the Negro race, voices the usual understanding of Simon in his poem "Simon, the Cyrenean Speaks":

"He never spoke a word to me,
And yet he called my name;
He never gave a sign to me,
And yet I knew and came.

"At first I said, 'I will not bear
His cross upon my back;
He only seeks to place it there
Because my skin is black!'

"But he was dying for a dream,
And he was very meek;
And in his eyes there shone a gleam
Men journey far to seek.

"It was himself my pity bought;
I did for Christ alone
What all of Rome could not have wrought
With bruise of lash or stone."[1]

[1] Reprinted by permission of Harper & Brothers.

Though used with fine effect in Mr. Cullen's poem, and frequently elsewhere, there seems to be no foundation for two popular traditions regarding Simon of Cyrene.

There is, first, no reasonable basis for thinking that Simon was a Negro. Though Cyrene is in Africa, it is located in North Africa, on the coast of what is now Tripoli, where Negroes did not and do not reside in any numbers. Moreover, Simon is a Jewish, not a Negro name. In addition, Cyrene was a Greek settlement, though with a large percentage of Jews. Alexander the Great had granted the Jews of Cyrene equal rights of citizenship with the Greeks, which made the city particularly popular with the Jews. Several references in the Acts of the Apostles to the Cyreneans of Jerusalem indicate that they were rather numerous there. The statement in the sixth chapter and the ninth verse of that book shows that they had a synagogue of their own in that city and were, therefore, almost certainly Jews. There is little doubt, then, that Simon the Cyrenean was a Jew rather than a Negro.

We are sorry to be forced to that conclusion. The Negro people have been so loaded with heavy crosses, have been so frequently the burden-bearers of civilization which denied them most of its benefits, have been so devoted to their Christ through sorrows and darknesses,

that it would have been most fitting that one of them should have had the glory of carrying the cross of the world's Saviour.

Again, Simon did not assume the cross of Jesus willingly. He was compelled by the Roman soldiers to take it. The three Gospels which contain word about Simon are unanimous about that fact. Two state that he was "requisitioned" by the soldiers—seized as animals or food might be seized by military command; the other states that the soldiers "laid hold upon one, Simon."

Jesus, exhausted by the physical sufferings caused by the beating and the cruelties, but more by the nervous reaction from intense strain, was unable to carry the cross beyond the city gates. The drain upon his energies had been severe. We do not know how Jesus had spent the day before the crucifixion, but we do know that from the evening of that day until his death there had been no respite. The apostles were exhausted before the agonizing hours in Gethsemane were completed. Those last hours spent with the apostles, in Gethsemane, in the betrayal, arrest, and shuttling trials would have long before broken one less sturdy or less poised.

The dull soldiers finally realized that the condemned could not carry the cross the full distance to Golgotha. The records do not state that Jesus fell beneath the load, but we may be

sure that evidences of his exhaustion were clearly manifest before the hardened soldiers gave heed to them. Then, being by no means anxious to exert themselves unnecessarily, the soldiers looked about to find one whom they might impress under the load.

Why they chose Simon we do not know. It may have been because he was a foreigner and thus one with whom liberties might more easily be taken. More likely, Simon caught the eye of the soldiers because of his unusual size and strength, which assured them that they themselves would not have to carry the cross.

Simon was hurrying back to the city from the country. He would not have left Jerusalem just before the Passover except by necessity, and he hastens that he may, after all, share in the all-important religious festival. He notes a crowd as he nears the city, and as he draws closer, soldiers and the victims of an execution. He tries to stem the tide of the multitude going in the opposite direction, and suddenly finds himself surrounded by soldiers who rudely seize him and noisily order him to carry the cross of one of the criminals who is exhausted. Refusal or resistance is futile, and Simon sullenly accepts the degrading task. With darkened brow, outraged dignity, and angry thoughts, he takes the cross and trudges on, straining with

the load, resentful, not merely against the soldiers, but also against this criminal with whom he is thus unwillingly and disgracefully associated. When, finally, his anger passes sufficiently to let him look at this condemned man, how is he affected?

Does the sight of this strange victim, so different from that which he expects, so sad, so poised, so kindly, so courageous, so god-like—does this sight change the whole course of Simon's life? Can Simon see, at arm's distance, the suffering Christ plodding wearily to Calvary and remain untouched? Unfortunately, we have no definite information.

In the Gospel of Mark, Simon is described and accredited to the Christians as "the father of Alexander and Rufus," who were, it seems, well and favorably known to the whole Christian community. Whether or not Simon ever became a Christian we do not know, but we have this hint that he did. Would that we could know all of the beautiful story!

What Simon at first considered to be an unfair and degrading burden he may have looked upon later as the happiest experience of his life; certainly his sons came to rejoice in it. Even as he carried the cross, even as he staggered on to Golgotha, Simon may have come to rejoice that he could lighten the load for this strangely

attractive man. It is not unreasonable to believe that Jesus, with his quick and deep appreciation and alert gentlemanliness, quietly dropped back to express with weighted word and glowing smile his appreciation of Simon's toil. And perhaps, by the time he reached Golgotha, Simon wished that instead of ending at the cross the journey with Jesus could extend far ahead, even throughout all the days of his life.

Yet it may have been years before Simon came to tell of a despised cross which had become his benediction and his glory. It may be that he never realized what an honor had been his, but we may be sure that his sons did. Can you not hear them say, "Yes, our father was the one who was privileged to bear our Master's cross"?

This cross was thrust upon Simon, not by loved ones or by kindly ones, but by arrogant and welching soldiers. There was not the slightest suggestion that it came in accordance with God's intent. Yet God used for Simon's ultimate welfare, as he does for ours, that which would not have come into his life if all people had followed God's will.

Jesus tells us that in his kingdom many that we now consider first shall be last, and many now last shall then be counted as first. His statement may be applied to experiences as well as to individuals. Many experiences of life that

we consider choice and desirable are last and least and even harmful in spiritual value; and other experiences against which we revolt and protest prove first, under his guidance, in creating character and experience and usefulness. The triumphs which we desire are frequently brought through the cross which we despise.

Would it be possible to find a sentence that cuts more cleanly across the dominant spirit of our American multitude, that could be more generally unpopular than these words of Jesus —"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"? Self-denial and cross-bearing for Americans to-day! Do marriage customs, Prohibition, divorce, and speed laws, early training, public opinion, churches and morals interfere with one's "fullest self-expression"? So much, we are noisily told, the worse for them! Are we expected to do something unpleasant, humiliating, hard? Away with it! Away with all moral conventions and inhibitions that would clip the wings of genius! Away with the anachronism of religion, which would manufacture mountains of morality out of the mole-hills of conventions!

Self-denial possesses no virtue merely as self-denial, or cross-bearing merely as cross-bearing.

No particular merit belongs to one who is weazened and dried out by a negative existence. Yet we Americans need to learn, as Simon did, the value of a cross and the virtue of self-denial. We need to learn that by them we may keep our bodies and appetites servants and not masters, we may hold steadily the road to worthy goals, we may be frugal in order to be generous. We say, therefore, "No" to the trivial and the destroying, that we may say "Yes" to the majestic and the ennobling.

A pastor suggested in a prayer-meeting that each person speak of the Bible character he or she would choose to be, if choice could be made. We can guess that Moses was suggested, and John, who rested on the bosom of the Master, and Paul, and James, and Mary, and many others. But one thoughtful man said, "I would like to have been Simon the Cyrenean, and have borne the cross of Jesus."

Jesus bears his crosses to-day—galling loads and heartaches—because people called to be the children of God are crushed by burdens grievous to be borne, because little ones are caused to stumble, because the diseased have none to help them into the healing pool, because the wounded on the road to Jericho are passed by, because the multitude are sheep without a shepherd. Has Jesus no cross for us to bear for him in a

world where there are child labor, and war, and abuse of leisure, and absorption in material aims, and voracious appetite for speculative profits, and inequalities of opportunity, and mechanization of life, and forgetfulness of God, and hunger and sickness and sorrow? "Must Jesus bear the cross alone, and all the world go free?"

"To know the fellowship of his sufferings" even to the extent that we shall be "conformable unto his death"—not unto his life, but unto his death! Thus Paul profoundly expresses his desire of sharing the crosses of Christ.

"They spat in his face and hewed him a cross
On that dark day.
The cross was heavy; Simon bore it
Golgotha way.
O Master, the cross is heavy!

"They ripped his hands with driven nails
And flayed him with whips.
They pressed the sponge of vinegar
To his parched lips.
O Master, thy dear blood drips!

Men follow Simon, three and three,
And one and one,
Down through valleys and up long hills
Into the sun.
O Master, Master—into the sun!"[1]

[1] By Raymond Kresensky. Reprinted by permission of The Christian Century.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE PENITENT MALEFACTOR

These satellites which cluster about Calvary are, with the exception of three, dark and foul or nebulous stars. Whatever beauty and light the apostles may finally possess, they give forth during the events of the crucifixion only irritating and malodorous smoke. Simon the Cyrenean, Joseph of Arimathæa, and the penitent malefactor of Calvary are, on the contrary, stars of light—Simon the least, Joseph the next, and the unnamed malefactor the brightest. The last has become to many a morning star of hope.

The malefactors who shared the ignominy of the cross with Jesus were not thieves but robbers—they did not steal slyly like Judas, but plundered violently like Barabbas. Evidently, they were prisoners of the Romans rather than of the Jews, perhaps caught and sentenced, if they had a trial, that very day. The Romans, ordinarily, made short shrift of robbers who had infested Judæa, and executions followed hard after captures. They were crucified with Jesus probably partly as a convenience, since the soldiers could execute three criminals almost as easily as one, but partly also as an added insult to Jesus.

As exactly as we can reproduce the situation the events and the sequence are as follows: The two robbers carried their own crosses to Calvary, as Jesus was supposed to do, and were naturally too much absorbed in their own burden and misfortune and forebodings to give more than casual attention to the third victim. They felt resentment rather than sympathy when, no longer able to bear his cross, he was relieved by Simon, who was requisitioned for the burden. They heard the bewailings and lamentations of some of the women of the accompanying multitudes, and their declarations of his innocence and goodness. (The Gospel records do not contain one instance of a woman who was antagonistic to Jesus throughout his entire ministry, or who shared in the foul deed of his death.) They heard also the exhortation of Jesus that these women weep not for him, but for themselves and their children, "For behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren. . . . Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us." History vindicates his judgment that the unfortunate ones were not the helpless victims, but the triumphant people who were accomplishing their long-cherished revenge.

On reaching Golgotha, the centurion divided the band of soldiers into three groups, each re-

sponsible for one execution, he choosing for himself the most important one. The soldiers went about the cruel deed with dispatch, nailing the victims on the crosses while upon the ground, and then elevating them. As the central cross jolted into its earthen socket, with excruciating pain to their victim, the robbers wonderingly heard the first word from the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Coming in such complete contrast to their own bitter cursings and desire for revenge, this Christlike sentence pierced through the pain-dulled consciousness of one of the robbers.

Matthew and Mark declare that each of the robbers joined in the reproachings and taunts which leaders, soldiers, multitude, and even those who casually passed by, hurled at Jesus: "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross," and "He saved others; himself he cannot save." One of the robbers, adding to the insults heaped upon the suffering Saviour, with crude and bitter irony, wrung out: "Art thou not the Christ? save thyself and us."

Upon the second robber, even in the self-centeredness of fear and agony, Jesus had been making deep impress. In this unusual companionship of ignominy and suffering, he was totally different from what the robber expected; he was acting and speaking and enduring as none other could do. At first our malefactor

joined almost unconsciously with his kind in the abuse; then he became silent. When the first robber added his special insult to the taunts which filled the air, his conviction was crystallized, his revolutionary choice made, and even while writhing in pain, he cried out, "Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." And then follows his definite appeal to his fellow-sufferer, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

The malefactor's faith was exceedingly crude. It is almost if not quite certain that he was a Jew, with at least some knowledge, from boyhood training, of the expected Messiah. That he had had any previous contact with Jesus is improbable. If he had, the reproach he cast at first on Jesus would mean that he had rejected him. The account gives the impression, however, that he was one coming into fresh contact with the Master. His appeal, "Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom," might be translated, "Remember me when thou comest *into* thy kingdom"—the first indicating Christ's return as Messiah, the second his entrance into the Father's presence. The first is more likely. Either interpretation includes a belief in the

existence of God, in life continuing after death, in some special relationship that Jesus held to God and man. That these confidences had been clearly formulated in his mind, or could be accurately stated, is improbable. The penitent held a modicum of faith. But only the great truths count when one is in the grip of agonizing death.

And yet the malefactor's words indicate a far-reaching change of attitude. He did not believe over a long range, but he believed deeply. Many Christians to-day are holding many expectations lightly and when convenient, rather than holding the few essentials profoundly and drastically. This criminal manifested nothing of the attitude as expressed by Charles Reade in *The Cloister and the Hearth* in telling of a man endangered by a storm at sea: "I vow to Saint Christopher at Paris a wax image of his own weight, if I win safe to land." A friend remonstrated that all his possessions would not purchase so much wax, but is answered in a whisper: "Hold your tongue, you fool. Think ye, I am in earnest? Let me but win safe to land, I'll not give him a rush dip."

Deeply the malefactor realized his sin. Note how, in his rebuke of the other robber, he turns from "thou" to "we": "Dost not *thou* fear God, seeing *thou* art in the same condemnation? And *we* indeed justly, for *we* receive the due reward

of *our* deeds." A shallowly stirred man would have said *"Thou* indeed justly—*you* are getting what you deserve." He did not excuse himself for his brutalities by claiming to be a victim of glandular deficiencies, or youthful inhibitions! Clean-cut he turned to Jesus, without full comprehension of how much it entailed, but with profound sincerity. Like the Neapolitan peasant who struck his spade into the soil to dig a well, and discovered the hidden glory and wealth of Herculaneum, so the penitent malefactor is choosing an allegiance that will take him much further than he realized, but he is happy to make the choice. As the headlight reveals only a few yards on the road, and does not show the hills miles beyond, so he trusts the future, whatever it may reveal, to the newly found friend who is sufficient for the terror of the present.

Jesus repeatedly responded to crude deep-going faith. His treatment of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda is to the point. The unfortunate fellow, "thirty and eight years in his infirmity," held a childish faith that the bubbling waters, agitated by natural causes, were "troubled" by an angel, and that if he were fortunate enough to enter first into the pool after the bubbling, he would be healed. Many of us would have considered it necessary to direct a careful dissertation to this ignoramus,

beginning: "Now, my dear man, you must rise above such vulgar superstitions. Such ideas as you hold are relics of the past." Jesus scarce took time even to transfer the childish faith of this man unto himself and unto God. Likewise, in dealing with Mary Magdalene, with the man born blind, with the blind man of Jericho, with the Gadarean maniac, and with many others, the Master showed an alarming disregard for technical and creedal tests of worthiness to enter upon discipleship. He was scandalously careless of the orthodoxy of his converts, and never once presented a suggestion of a catechism! He had a naïve confidence that when a man's attitude to God and man was right, and when his experience of fellowship with God was thus clear and developing, explanations of the faith (theologies) and statements of faith (creeds) would in due time be well taken care of. He did not, as some of his followers do, invert the proper sequence.

There was not the slightest hesitancy on the part of Jesus in opening a door that had so wide and so low a threshold that even a weak, dying robber could enter. There were no questions about his belief in the virgin birth, or about the three persons of the Trinity, or about past life already repented.

"Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The word "paradise"

revives in his burning memory half-forgotten boyhood teachings. Paradise!—the lost Eden, the garden, cool and fragrant, where violence and hatred and pain were unknown. To this brigand, writhing in agony and thirst, who had spent life in tumult and riot, and who was hopelessly grappling with death, that was the one word that could bring a vision of coolness and quiet and forgiveness and protection. It is futile for us, in our easy chairs, to attempt to read much in and out of Jesus' promise. The Master is not talking to a group of theological experts, using words that would accurately picture details of future life. He is speaking to a desperate, dying man, who has not a moment to lose, and using the familiar terms which will best bring him light and peace.

Jesus grants to the penitent much more than he asks. He asks indefinitely merely to be remembered in some far away future; he is promised that he will be that very day with Jesus where all will be well. The promise is that he will be not merely in company with Jesus, but sharing with Jesus—the Greek preposition is μετα and not σύν.

Is that not enough to know about heaven? Any place that we share with Jesus is adequate for our fondest dreams. The Master, going somewhat beyond this statement, told his apostles on another occasion that he would go

"to prepare a place for" them. My mother, a preacher's widow, when near death, said to me: "You remember that when we moved, your father always planned to go ahead of the rest of the family, so that he could complete the hard settling before we arrived. He always wanted to have the house clean, the carpets down, the stoves up before our coming. I think of your father as though he had only gone ahead a few years into the better land to get things ready for me and you children." That is what Jesus says he is doing for us. And is not that enough?

One message in connection with the penitent robber is peculiarly needed to-day—the glad tidings that the Master holds welcome for all sincerely seeking persons, no matter how black the past, nor why the delay.

With that wonderful fact, we must, however, keep clear two truths. The first is that, while God forgives sin, yet the scar remains and the years of growth have been lost. Just after penning those words, the writer walked down the main street of a great city and saw a blind man urging men to become Christians. Surely, one would sympathize with any person who speaks the message to even a few of the heedless, shepherdless multitude, but was what this exhorter said true—"Jesus will save you—he will take away your sins as though they had

never existed"? Will God do that? God does forgive and heal, but can even God undo the tragic consequences of sin wrought in the lives of this robber, his friends, and his victims? As the hands are more easily soiled when the flesh is roughened, so sin more readily clings to a soul roughened by previous sin. It is joyous that this penitent man on the cross finally knew the Saviour's beauty and mercy; it is tragic that sin stained and ensmalled his soul so many years.

Second, it is far better for one to know the Lord and to work in his vineyard forty years than four, or than only a few moments. Yet the Lord of the vineyard desires those of the four years, or even those of the few moments, and rewards them according to his own generosity and not according to the length of labor. There was a time when we seriously underestimated the need of keeping children in the Kingdom. (Are we not too much assuming to-day that we are holding them to Christ if we merely have their names upon the records of the church?) The ambulance, some years past, caught our imagination more than the "fence around the edge of the cliff" over which the people fell. To-day we are underestimating the need of saving the adults. In fact, the statistics of the ages at which people begin the Christian life are frequently quoted in such a way as to indi-

cate that after thirty an adult not already won to the Christian way is hopeless. Such an attitude is heresy in any evangelical church. The broken-hearted, the sheep lost upon the mountainside, men "sitting at the receipt of custom," the many possessed of devils, the Magdalenes, the Marthas, and Marys, and Zacchæuses, the Nicodemuses and the rich young rulers to-day need the rebuking, loving, healing message of life as much as they did in Judæa two thousand years ago. If we are not reaching the adults to-day, it is no excuse to say that we are doing better by the children than our forefathers did. If certain methods of reaching adults do not work well now, it is our responsibility to find methods adapted to our day which will enable us to obey the great commission.

A tragedy, against which he raved and fought, brought so wonderful a result to the penitent robber! He literally leaped from the crushing toils of death into the arms of God. God wrung out of so terrible an experience as a crucifixion, which surely was not in accordance with his plans, the salvation of a soul. There is no evil thing that can come to man's life but that God will work it out "for good," if the man has the right attitude. For *good*, not for selfish satisfaction, and ease, and egotism.

Such a happy result does not occur auto-

matically. Trouble, pain, hardship may embitter a person, and bring him into open revolt against all goodness. The robber on the third cross experienced nothing of the revolution of his penitent companion. Judging from his maledictions, the same set of circumstances accomplished opposite results with him. The set of the sail determines where the ship rides more than the kind or the direction of the wind. The attitude of the individual toward the calamity, toward God, and toward life determines whether it remains a disaster or becomes a benediction. "To them that love God all things work together for good, *even* to them that are called according to *his* purpose."

Why are we who trust God so fearful, then, of the sterner things of life? It sometimes requires the dust to reveal the sunshine, and always the rain to make possible the rainbow. The evening reveals many of the day's darkest clouds to be golden. Why do we quail before death, and postpone it a few miserable days at the expense of usefulness? A woman, treasured in my memory, knowing that she was shortening her numbered days by continuing some loved and needed work, definitely and knowingly persisted in it, choosing to live fewer days usefully than more days uselessly. And who can forget that daughter who, caring for her aged father, refused to deny him certain responsibilities

which he was loath to confess he could not carry? When a fatal accident came, in the course of some task which he found too great for his strength, he whispered to her, "I'm so glad you let me die like a man."

Death is by no means the worst thing in the world. So the malefactor found, even of death so terrible.

Except for the women who bewailed the fate of Jesus on the way to Calvary and the few friends who stood by the cross, the only sympathetic voice raised to Jesus from the time of the arrest to the crucifixion was that of a robber. Those from whom the most would be expected had betrayed, sold, denied, and deserted their best friend. But from a most unexpected source, from the cross of a dying criminal, came one ray of light in those darkened hours, came the understanding look, the sympathetic soul, the inspiring joy.

The outlook is never so hopeless, the desertion of friends never so complete, but that help comes from some unexpected source—a fellow prisoner sings and we are listening, a "Pippa" passes, a man sees a potter re-form a spoiled bowl, a woman asks for the crumbs that fall from the table.

Glorious it is that in those last moments of his life Jesus could fulfill his heart's desire in find-

ing the hundredth sheep and bringing it to the fold, that, dying, he could demonstrate even among the most unpromising, his saying, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself."

## CHAPTER VIII

## JUDAS ISCARIOT

SATELLITES nearest the sun may be coldest. Judas Iscariot, though near the burning love of Jesus, was frozen at heart. All the world abominates a traitor. On three of the four sides of the monument erected at Schuylerville in honor of the surrender of Burgoyne, are reliefs of three heroes of the victory—Philip Schuyler, Horatio Gates, and Daniel Morgan. The fourth side is blank, because the most conspicuous hero of the surrender could not be represented. He was Benedict Arnold. Even in England, where he lived following his treason, Arnold was ignored and despised.

Judas, once an honored name, has become a class name for a traitor. A humorous magazine may report that a mother names a thirteenth child Judas because "it were better if he had never been born," but we know that no mother would actually thus name a child. In the Passion Plays the betrayer is represented as a low, cunning rascal—a character of malice and greed without a saving quality. And it is difficult to persuade a man to take the part because social and business disadvantages emerge.

Even to this day the people of the Island of Corfu vent their hatred of Judas on Easter Day. At a given signal they throw vast quantities of crockery from windows and roofs, executing an imaginary stoning of the traitor. In France, a religious dance is still popular. Thirteen candles, representing Jesus and his apostles, form the center of the ceremonial. A large candle represents the Master, and a small one, Judas. Homage is paid the former, and indignity the latter, until at the climax of the dance, the small candle is ground elaborately and joyfully under heel.

Dante in his "Purgatory" confines Judas to the nethermost, the most hopeless and most terrible hell. He is immersed not in a lake of fire, but in one of ice, prepared for those who are guilty of what Dante counted the foulest of all sins, the betrayal of benefactors. In the center of this icy gloom stands Satan, "vast and hideous," and in the jaws of the central of his three mouths, champed and torn by his teeth, is Judas Iscariot.

Judas has been so generally pictured as the personification of evil that it would be strange if someone did not rise in his defense. It is rather a common disaster for the good so to overdo their attack on the bad that sympathy is transferred from themselves to the evil folks. So it has been considered rather clever among

some to picture Judas as, after all, a sheep in wolf's clothing. De Quincey perhaps makes better defense of Judas than any other, explaining that Judas was attempting merely to force his Master to overcome his hesitancy in claiming his place of power, to compel vigorous action, and to create a crisis that would demonstrate the supremacy of his Lord. He is, thus, pictured merely as one who could not "wait patiently for the Lord," for the impracticable, unhurried ways of the Master, but must bring in the Kingdom in hot and dusty and noisy haste. He might have been, in this interpretation, the prototype of the modern Barnum and Bailey preacher who demands a crowd at any cost! God's ends are permanently accomplished only by God's ways.

The truth regarding Judas doubtless lies between these two extremes. Judas was not from birth a hopeless traitor, chosen by Jesus because he knew that he would fulfill the divine decrees by betraying him. It is true that in two or three places the Gospel writers seem to indicate that Judas was unworthy from the beginning of his association with Jesus. But it was hard for them to be quite fair to their fallen companion; perhaps, writing after the unbelievable betrayer's kiss, they read into the past some of their more recent knowledge and feelings. Other references clearly recognize the retrogression of

Judas—for instance, the statement in Luke: "Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor," and "Satan entered into Judas," the time being Thursday of Holy Week. To consider Judas a traitor from the beginning does violence to our confidence in our Lord, our faith that a measure of self-determination has been given to all men, and our trust in the fairness of God.

Neither was Judas one who, masking as a traitor, sincerely desired to serve his loved Master in the betrayal. The downrightness of his final opposition is almost a relief from the hypocrisies, lies, and side-steppings of Pilate and the ecclesiastical leaders. Jesus' words, "Good were it for that man if he had not been born," and the traitor's remorse over his success clearly indicate that any theory that exonerates Judas of great guilt fails to give weight to basic facts.

Judas was chosen by Jesus on the same basis as the other apostles and with the same discerning eye—the Master, with his ability to see fruit in the bud, recognized in him qualities that would make him a happy companion and a helpful associate. There are indications that he was considered by no means the least promising of the twelve. He had bright possibilities for good, which, developed by companionship with Jesus, might adorn the noblest of Christian personalities. He had also strong tendencies for evil, which might make the foulest of traitors.

Jesus did not give up Judas even at the very end. The "sop" which he gave to Judas at the supper in the upper room was in accordance with an Oriental custom. The host presented by his own hand a tidbit to some favored guest as a token of special regard. We are entitled to see in this act a final attestation of friendship, a despairing but not hopeless appeal to the sulking disciple.

One of our present-day poets, Agnes Lee Freer, pictures Mary, mother of Jesus, after the death of her Son, meeting another mother who was also mourning "a child beloved and lost." The second mother describes her child as follows:

"I too have rocked my little one.
Oh, he was fair!
Yea, fairer than the fairest sun,
And like its rays through amber spun
His sun-bright hair."

"His ways were ever darling ways"—
And Mary smiled—
"So soft and clinging! Glad relays
Oh, love were all his precious days."[1]

Then Mary discovers that the child "so sweet a flower" was Judas Iscariot!

How terribly we find illustrated in Judas the fact that it is possible to go wrong even under the best conditions and in company with the noblest companions! The thick ice of greed,

[1] Reprinted by permission of the author.

ambition, and jealousy may develop even in the warm climate of the Master's presence. A man can make his hell even in heaven.

The degeneration of Judas cannot be clearly traced, as the Gospel narratives do not give us definite and detailed information. At best, we can pick out two or three crises in his downfall.

About a year before the crucifixion, following the feeding of the five thousand, the people resolved to make Jesus an earthly king. The Master seized the opportunity of thrusting home the truth that he was not mainly interested in providing the people with the bread that perishes, or the flesh that profits nothing, or the kingdom that passes away, but, rather, that he was mightily in earnest about a spiritual kingdom in which the will of the Father in heaven was to be joyfully supreme.

The record states, "Upon this many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him." They were through with this impractical dreamer who talked about "bread out of heaven" and with this Messiah who suggested that his way was not one of glory and might, but of sacrifice. Jesus, sad but inexorable, preferring to lose all his followers rather than to lower his standard, turned directly to the apostles and searchingly asked, "Would ye also go away?" Peter essayed to speak for all the apostles, de-

claring that the Master alone had "the words of eternal life;" but, evidently, he did not speak for Judas. For Jesus said, with deep anguish, "One of you is a devil."

Clearly Judas had now lost sympathy with Jesus, and should have been honest enough to leave him at once. Probably at the beginning of his association with Jesus he had no more materialistic idea of the Master's kingdom than had the other apostles. Instead of yielding himself to the beauty and value of the spiritualized vision, however, he became more and more angry at his material loss. He had given himself over to dreams of tangible advantages and the exaltations of his career when the Kingdom should be established. Now that Jesus had frustrated those hopes, he was filled with disappointment and anger and revenge and hatred, and went about with darkened countenance. During the next few months these qualities slowly dominated the good in Judas, and finally possessed him entirely. Degeneration is the result of a slow leak rather than of a blowout.

Judas began to think of himself as the injured one. What right had Jesus, he might have argued, to call him from his occupation to enter on such a wild chase? Did not everybody know that the Messiah was to break the bonds of Israel and to exalt her and her people above all

the other nations? What did the Master expect of a man, after all these months of privation, if no recompense was to be given him? Surely Jesus was robbing Judas of what was his honest due. The little that Judas could pilfer from the common purse was a trifle compared to what he might have earned and saved had he continued at his work, instead of following this dreamer.

The frequent warnings of Jesus against covetousness were uttered perhaps with Judas particularly in mind, and with Judas illustrating the danger. And doubtless these warnings did not tend to heal the widening breach between disciple and Master. For when one is in love with some sin, and determined to continue in it, he begins to hate the one bold enough to rebuke it. Instead of learning to hate the sin, Judas increasingly was angered at Jesus for his warnings against it.

Then, too, the more an insincere and unrepentant person is pursued by one of moral earnestness, the more resentful he becomes. He replies first to the urging "I go, sir," but does not go. If urged further, politeness gives place to rudeness in word and then in act, and, at the end, to hatred. Judas was so blinded by hatred that he did not notice the majestic bearing of Jesus after Gethsemane, so majestic that even the ruffians engaged by the high priest fell back.

He could approach without embarrassment with his smirking kiss.

The most devastating factor in the degeneration of Judas was his persistent sinning against love at its loveliest. To be within sight of the Master's yearning and understanding eyes, to be within sound of his tender voice, and yet to refuse his constantly offered forgiveness and love; to suspect that he knew of the growing darkness and bitterness of the disciple's heart, and yet to know that he did not defend himself, or expose the culprit to the other apostles, or cast him out; to be conscious of smiting, with perhaps the sharpest blow of all, one whose heart was already breaking, and yet to persist in darkening thoughts; to be seeking to find in kindness and tenderness and love evidences of favoritism and unfairness and depreciation—all of this put spears through the heart of love, and brought Judas to the point where he could sell the best friend a man ever had for the price of a slave. Persistently to sin against such love as Christ's is to be searing heart and conscience with a white-hot iron. The ancients said, "The gods creep up on feet of wool." The results of many sins are so gradual and so destructive of fine discriminations that victims scarcely realize that a cancer eats out their life. In a few months such sin as we have been thinking

about turns Judas the apostle into Judas the traitor, who sneaks way from his companions at night and bargains with his Master's enemies to betray him.

"Be sure your sin will find you out," even if your friends do not.

The one flower in this sordid picture is the terrible remorse, and, it is hoped, the overmastering repentance of the betrayer. At last—but oh how late!—the stony heart is melted. May we not trust that the account given in Matthew represents the last scene in this distressing life more clearly than the account given in Acts? May we not also hope that Judas' conscience-smitten confession, "I have betrayed innocent blood," met somewhere with kindlier reception than it did from the ecclesiastical leaders, his companions in sin? Associates in crime are notoriously unwilling to accept their share of accountability. "How does that concern us?" they blandly say. "That is your affair." In contrast, we have a Father, revealed in our Saviour, who gladly shares the penalty of the very sins from which he has been so eagerly calling us. We are not only sure, through Christ, that he never closes the door on us when we come, but also that he takes the initiative and seeks us out. Would the God of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ pass by repentant Judas?

## CHAPTER IX

## THE APOSTLES

The apostles at the time of the crucifixion were only stars in the making. They were indistinct nebulæ giving little prospect of forming those bright planets which are now satellites of our Sun. They were a clear and cruel disappointment throughout the whole series of events culminating in the crucifixion. Even though the Master was prepared for their defections, he was not expecting so complete a rout.

In the fellowship of the last evening spent with Jesus in the "upper room" they made a sorry spectacle. Jesus was the one facing the suffering and the ignominy, but the apostles were the limp ones. It was necessary for him to support and encourage them, rather than the reverse. It is no small tribute to the strength of the Master that it seems never to have occurred to the apostles that they ought to help him who was face to face with so terrible an ordeal. Jesus so incurred the penalty of the strong that he not merely bore his own crushing load but also dragged along his spiritless friends.

The last hours that any closely knit group spend together before some final separation are

hours sacred to memories and hopes and generosities. What a shock to Jesus that at the beginning the apostles staged a dispute about future rank! How discouraging it was to have this demonstration of the inadequacy with which the apostles, upon whom he was so greatly depending, had grasped his teachings and his spirit! According to Matthew, this dispute must have come soon after the description of the last Judgment, in which Jesus declared that rewards and retributions are determined not by prominences and honors, but by humble kindnesses expressed to those who are hungry, and thirsty, and strange, and naked and in prison. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, *even* these least, ye did it unto me." Perhaps Jesus was so discouraged by the ambitions of his comrades that he could not talk, and so acted the parable of humble service. To some of us it is the greatest of all the matchless parables of Jesus—washing the feet of the apostles, and then saying, perhaps with choking voice, "A servant is not greater than his Lord," and—"He that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."

How incomprehensibly slow of understanding were those apostles that night! Thomas interrupted the statement, "Whither I go, ye know the way," with his complaint that they did not

even know the place Jesus was going, and how, then, could they guess the road he would take? If Jesus had only told them the place he was going, perhaps they could have had an idea about which of two or three roads he was taking! Philip also interrupted, saying, in effect: "Why this talking in enigmas, and all these will-o'-the-wisps? Permit us to *see* this Father of whom you talk, and it will satisfy us." Again, Jesus was changing his former instructions—"When I sent you forth without purse, and wallet, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. And he said unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet"—a receptacle for food, etc.—"and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword." Jesus was saying that the apostles were confronting supreme crises and deadly hostility, and that they must rely on themselves. It is indisputably clear that he was not advising an appeal to the sword when we recall the rebuke he gave to the one who used the sword against those who came to arrest him, and the way in which he repaired the hurt of the one injured. He repudiates an unrighteous violence in even a righteous cause. One of them answered, with that earthly matter-of-factness which has cursed our interpretation of our Lord's glorious figures of speech, "Lord, behold, here are two swords." With a wry smile, almost hopeless be-

cause of their spiritual insensibility, Jesus replied, "It is enough!" Two swords can accomplish as much for his purposes as two thousand.

In Gethsemane the apostles are dull and sleepy in comprehension as well as in body. In grave crises people need both solitude and companionship; they need to be alone with themselves and with God, and yet to have friends stand by in sympathetic understanding. Jesus felt both needs, craved the kindly alertness of his companions—and three times he found them asleep.

Judas betraying the Master with a kiss; Peter even boasting "If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee," and then, milk-eyed, disclaiming him with cursings; all the apostles forsaking him and fleeing—these complete the dark picture of the apostles in the events of the crucifixion. We listen in vain for one agonizing cry of protest from the apostles throughout these trials and abuses, one heartening word directed to the Master, one groan when the lash fell, or the thorns tore, or the nails pierced, one stalwart soul daring to share the ignominy, one rash hopeless act in defense of the majestic martyr. At the siege of Acre a bomb with burning fuse fell at the feet of Napoleon. Two grenadiers instantly seized him in their arms, covered him with their bodies, while another seized the bomb in his hands and hurled it away. Why did no

one of the apostles perform some such heroic act? Peter's resort to the sword was the nearest to it, but coming events prove it was more braggadocio than gallantry. The quirk that Chancellor Bismarck unjustly applied to Lord Salisbury might fairly be applied to the twelve—they were "lath painted to resemble iron."

Is it not worth much to us to realize that Jesus continued to trust such men, to depend on them, to expect much of them? We have reason, therefore, to be hopeful that he yet has patience with us, unprofitable workmen that we be, and that he can use even us.

With this exhibition of inadequacy on the part of those upon whom he was utterly depending for the continuation of his ministry and message, why did Jesus dare to trust them with the future? He had refused on other occasions to court death, stating that his "time is not yet come." We even read, "And after these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Judæa because the Jews sought to kill him." He could have postponed the final issue very simply before "going up to Jerusalem" by remaining in Galilee. Probably even up to and including the time of his examination before Herod, he could have honorably extended his ministry for months by appealing to Herod to

save his life. The time would be well spent in making sure that the apostles were "rooted and grounded," that they were full-grown followers who would proclaim the good news with courage and understanding. Why did not Jesus postpone this violent separation until his apostles were better prepared?

The reason is clearly given in the Master's declaration, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter (perhaps better, the Helper) will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you." Disregarding theological implications and complications, what did Jesus mean? He meant that the apostles had developed to the point at which they needed to be thrown on their own resources, and God's. They were so dependent on Christ's bodily presence, and so void of personal responsibility for the proclamation and manifestation of the good news that their spiritual development was being stifled. Even in his wise visible lordship, the complete realization of the presence and help of the heavenly Father, as revealed in him, was now hampered. Jesus understood what wise parents and teachers and preachers and missionaries learn, that the time comes when the dominating personality must retire more and more so that the development of immature personalities may be free and full.

Jesus, therefore, having as his objective the largest possible development of the personalities of the future leaders of his Kingdom, did not hesitate to trust them, unpromising as they were. He had full confidence that, after their first panic and their helplessness were gone, and after in humiliation and defeat their hearts were fully open to the living and loving God revealed by the living and loving Saviour, they would be flaming tongues, noble examples, valiant martyrs of the glad message of the goodness and mercy and help of God.

Jesus made on one occasion a strange exultant statement. He declared that he saw "Satan fallen as lightning from heaven;" that is, he was so sure of the conquest of evil and of the ultimate victory of his kingdom that he declared he had already seen the prince of darkness in dramatic dethronement and destruction. When was it that Jesus thrilled with this certainty? It was not when he demonstrated great healing powers, or when he was offered the allegiance of a rich young man, or when the multitude determined to make him King. It was, rather, when the seventy "returned with joy" from their personal ministrations to the needy and from their proclamations of the newly found truth. When Jesus saw his message and life reproduced and multiplied in seventy flaming personalities, he was positive that he had found the means whereby

the Kingdom of Sin was spectacularly doomed. So also with the twelve, he placed final dependence upon awakened and enlarged and instructed individuals. His method and his objective was to inspire followers into becoming the greatest and most useful personalities possible.

It may be well for us to ponder this objective of Jesus, and to realize that the church and all its organizations should have a like goal.

Historically, the church has had three objectives—all of them inadequate: to mediate the grace of God, through the church and its rites and sacraments, to indoctrinate people with a certain definite body of truth, to save men from hell and to prepare them for heaven.

The objective of Jesus, which should be ours, includes much more than may at first appear. It includes evangelism—for there can be no Christian personality without definite commitment to Jesus, and openness of the whole being to God. It includes recreational programs—for recreation, provided it does not degenerate into wreckreation, is a large factor in making friends, in self-expression, in developing courage, alertness, co-operation, and sportsmanship in winning and in defeat. It includes religious education—for knowledge of the Bible, of church history, of present religious and moral move-

ments, of applications of Christian truth and spirit, are vital. It includes the social gospel—for physical, political, economical, industrial, and educational conditions are trenchant factors in the development and expression of Christian personality. It includes worship—for no individual can achieve and maintain his noblest possibilities without contact with the Father of Souls.

If church workers, particularly ministers, would keep this objective clearly in mind it would help to do away with the lack of proportion, the running off on side-roads, the narrow jealousies so frequently found in our church organizations. It would considerably affect our methods of work. A church would not be judged by the feverishness with which the wheels go round or by the number of "activities" staged. There would be less interest in getting things done and more interest in making great souls. We would be willing to let folks fail sometimes, knowing that failure is frequently a large factor in growth of personality. Others would be placed in positions of honor, while we remained in the background. We would care less for a "bang-up" meeting than for one in which some beginner with stumbling speech expressed a pondered truth. We would be more interested in the producer than in the product, in the pray*er* than in the prayer.

This objective would save the preacher from the "big-boss" idea of his relationship to his people. Laymen sometimes think they compliment their preacher by saying, "Now, pastor, you are the boss; just say the word and we will back you to the limit." Many preachers want an official board to be merely a ratifying committee of their plans. They consider that any layman who presumes to hold an opinion contrary to theirs about reshingling the parsonage or recarpeting the church is halting the chariots of the Lord. They take peculiar delight in "showing the layman his place."

Yet the Protestant pastor is called to be one who is the "helper of your joy," not one who has "lordship over your faith." Protestant and Christian attitudes demand that every Christian shall be his own prophet, his own priest, his own worker; that no person and no institution shall stand between the follower of Jesus and his understanding of the truth, his experience of God, and his responsibility to his Lord. In consequence, the function of the preacher in dealing with his people is not to hand down authoritative decrees about what they shall think and experience and do, but, rather, to help build them up in those convictions, confidences, and affections which make Christian character and life. The Christian preacher is distinctly a propagator who plants and prunes rather than

a propagandist who dopes and dupes. The members of the church are to be friends, not slaves, of Jesus. Christian acts are to be fruit that grows out of the life of the tree, not tinsel and bulbs and presents fastened to the tree. The objective of the preacher should be the development of Christian personalities.

An Anglo-Catholic priest of unction was recently eloquently discoursing to a group of evangelical preachers about the glories of his priestly function. He glowingly pictured the priest gathering up in his arms the hopes and aspirations and sorrows and troubles of the entire congregation, and presenting them to the throne of God. He then asked if any other conception of the minister could be nobler. There is a far nobler conception, inspiring as the other may be to many. It is this: the wonderful privilege of the preacher to inspire and to strengthen his people so that *they themselves* will enter into the Holy of holies, that *they themselves* will examine their plans and hopes and anxieties and perplexities and defeats and successes in the immediate presence of our God, who is no respecter of persons, who seeks such as "worship him in spirit and in truth."

We believe in the freedom of both the pulpit and the pew. A robust independence of the laymen may well be fostered. A New England Puritan, it is said, was excommunicated from

the church and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Since he owned his pew and right of access to it, he could not be denied admission to public worship, and when he was barred from the table of the Lord he brought to the church his own bit of bread and cup of wine, and in the protection of his high-backed pew continued to partake of the sacrament of his Lord! Such independence is simply priceless. If we were better Protestants and better Christians in such valuation, we would have more large-minded, great-hearted laymen.

It requires bigness to worship and to work with people who differ greatly from us. But so long as we have a common love for Jesus, a mutual discovery of him as the way and the truth and the life, and a united purpose to extend his kingdom, we can honor differences in experience, in conduct, in explanations, and in statements of faith. Are we not gradually learning that we can gather up and combine everything that all of us calculate and observe and experience of God, and yet only touch the hem of his garment? We are told of a little old woman who was a member of a Methodist class in England. She was a genuine "lady"; she was brought to class by her "coach and pair"; she had three curls on either side of her head which wagged approvingly when she gave her testi-

mony. It happened that a member of the same class sold hot peas at Burley Fair. When he prayed he used about as much voice as he did in calling "Hot Peas" above the noise of his bell and the din of the fair. The little lady disliked his noise and one day said to him: "Brother, why do you pray so loud? Do you not know that God is not deaf?" The hawker was disconcerted and distressed by the reprimand, but replied, "No, lady, I know he hain't deaf; but, thank God, he hain't narvous, nather." Let none of us be too nervous with the other!

Paul, who himself was not naturally considerate of others who differed from him, comes to the heart of the matter in his majestic Psalm of love: gifts of prophecy, wonders of miracles, achievements of knowledge, of martyrdom, and of charity are of no value, he tells us, without love; they may even be done away, but if faith, hope, and love remain, the essentials of Christ are retained—"and the greatest of these is love." John, Son of Thunder, who would call down wrath upon the Samaritan village and seek the chief place in the kingdom, presents another trinity of Christian qualities in his old age when "the darkness is passing away,"—faith, goodness, and love, and again love is exalted as the foremost. Plato in his "Republic," seeking for the cementing quality which will unite his three classes into harmony and effectiveness, comes

partly to the same conclusion. The peculiar quality of the soldier, he tells us, is to be courage, of the worker temperance and industry, of the lawmaker wisdom; but what is to be the integrating virtue which will enable the three classes to work for the common good? It is justice. Plato's justice is "the recognition that other classes, their functions, outlooks, and interests, are necessary and useful, and the faith in the other classes that they can and will adopt a similar attitude." Although this quality of justice does not reach the heights of Christian sacrifice, we realize that it approaches the Christian ideal. Plato and Paul and John and Jesus realized the supreme need of love as the basis of social and spiritual harmony.

Alexander Whyte, great preacher of Scotland, showed this spirit when, in the midst of an acrimonious debate, he said, "Rather let error live than love die."

Who can estimate the harm that has been caused by herding people of similar experience and understanding of God into denominational inclosures, separated by high, spiked stone walls? Vagaries and idiosyncrasies have been exaggerated thereby, and the enlargement of experience and knowledge that comes from contact with those whose temperament and way have been different have been lost. The Chris-

tian who differs most from us, provided he be sincerely a Christian, may be most helpful to us in rounding out what is lacking in our Christian personality. If John Wesley had not learned from the Moravians, he probably would have remained a theological prig to the end of his life.

The Protestant ideal of the church and the preacher and the layman is practicable only among an educated people—educated both in the knowledge of the world and in that of the Spirit. "The moral obligation to be intelligent" inheres in Protestantism; no one can safely be his own prophet and priest and worker without that background which gives him moral discrimination, and without that knowledge necessary for rigid personal examination, comparison with experiences of others, accuracy of interpretation. Christ's confidence in his apostles was to a considerable degree based on their years of training and association with him. To have led them into a dramatic decision to follow him, and to have sent them forth with only an initial experience of him would have meant disaster. We can look beyond their disappointing failures during the events of the crucifixion, and see them in their strength, when the confidence of Jesus in them was vindicated. And we learn much from their failures.

## CHAPTER X

## THE MULTITUDE

SOME satellites are very large, like Jupiter; some are very small—planetoids, or even tiny meteors. The multitude are a cloud of infinitesimal meteors that were first attracted and then repelled by Jesus.

It has been customary in recent years to assume that "the multitude" connected with the trial and death of Jesus was actually a small group. In explanation, it is asserted that "populations have usually been indifferent to the fate of martyrs."

An impressive number of facts may be cited to prove that contention wrong. We have the direct statement of each of the Gospels that a large number of people were assembled, the Gospel of Luke, which is perhaps the most exactly accurate of the four in details, mentioning that "a *great* multitude of the people" followed Jesus from the trial to the crucifixion.

Jerusalem was entering upon a holiday period, with its population doubled, and perhaps more than doubled, by Jews from all sections of the Mediterranean. Moreover, many of them were

idle, the ceremonies of the Passover having not yet begun. The estimates of the size of the population of Jerusalem vary so greatly that one hesitates to guess the numbers in the city on the occasion of the crucifixion; the lowest estimate noted being one hundred thousand at the season of the Passover and the highest two million! At all events, enough people were there to make possible the gathering of a sizable crowd on short notice. In a city a crowd gathers at the least excuse. Jesus was one who "stirreth up the people"; he was an object of popular interest and one about whom strong contrary opinions were held. The leaders of the nation were involved, being dead set on accomplishing his downfall; they had been working on their plans for months, and now were hurrying their prisoner from place to place and calling a special midnight meeting of the council. An exciting contest was in prospect, preliminary conflicts during the week having whetted the appetite of the people for the final battle. We are told that "the whole company then rose up and brought him before Pilate"; this company including the seventy-one members of the council (the Sanhedrin) and the witnesses and guards and hangers-on, would easily number one hundred and fifty people. Where is the city which would not be immediately and deeply interested in such a group of prominent leaders hurrying in person

a prisoner to the Roman governor for trial and death sentence? Add these two facts, that Pilate, it is distinctively stated, summoned the people after the return of the prisoner from Herod—"And Pilate called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people"—and that the governor would not have granted his accustomed boon of the release of a prisoner except to a representative gathering of the people. We cannot, then, have the slightest doubt that "the multitude" connected with the trial and crucifixion of Jesus was composed of a large number of surging people.

Moreover, the crowd acted just as a large mass of people usually acts, providing a rueful illustration of the grave dangers of mob action.

It was fickle. The contrast between the multitude of Sunday, spreading garments and palms before Jesus and shouting, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," and the multitude of Friday, shouting imprecations and demanding "Crucify him," has often been drawn. It would be folly to infer that the two crowds were composed entirely of the same individuals, though, undoubtedly, the same type of interest would have drawn many to both occasions, and attracted many individuals to both events. But the contrast, though perhaps easily overdrawn, represents the change of popular opinion about Jesus over the period of five days. The

crowd of Palm Sunday had overdone the acclamation, having been led to extremes by the similarity of the event with an ancient well-known prophecy of the coming of the Messiah. They had discovered that the leaders were angry about the demonstration, were disappointed that the acclaimed Messiah had not followed up his advantage with a definite program and vigorous action, and had definitely turned against the one whom they had so joyously acclaimed their leader five days ago. They had come to the conclusion that Jesus was not competent to meet the needs of the national situation. He was building a bridge, they considered, which had no approaches on either side of the river.

It was easily influenced, not by reason and noble sentiment, but by prejudice and bloodthirstiness, by disappointment whipped-up by crafty men who knew how to play upon well-known weaknesses and explosive passions. At the beginning, few, if any, of the crowd expected to go as far as they did. They were disappointed and irritated, but that was about all. But they had entered Niagara above the falls, the current was swift and certain, and skillful men guided them into the center of the stream.

It was insensible to moral worth, choosing Barabbas in place of Jesus, and accepting leadership which it knew was biased and hostile. Perhaps it could even be said that it was

irritated by the spiritual superiority of Jesus. Mobs have a fashion of killing their robbers and prophets; the first because they are too low and inconveniencing, the second, because they are too high and unconforming and rebuking.

It was calloused to suffering. It seems impossible that the sight of this harassed good Man, bullied from one court to another, mistreated and scourged, would excite no pity from the multitude, and that the sight of him upon the cross would fail to break any heart, no matter how stony. But the multitude incomprehensibly delighted in these cruelties!

It was indifferent; it did not care. It could even shout, "His blood be on us, and on our children!" If it had responded to Pilate's reiterated opinion, "I have found no cause of death in him," or had asked for his release when offered the opportunity, surely Jesus would have been saved. What if he was a victim of the leaders' hatred? What if he was innocent of the charges and unworthy of death? What if justice was being perverted? What if he had been a most helpful kindly friend? The multitude were not interested, just as frequently it is not interested to-day in injustices, sufferings, evils which are within its power to remedy.

If this multitude at the Prætorium and at Calvary is a fair sample of crowds, and if their

actions indicate what may be usually expected of "the masses," there is little hope either for democracy or for Protestantism.

Democracy, even in its safeguarded form of representative government, is founded upon the expectation that the people can be trusted; that, in the long run and on the average, their instincts and understanding will lead them to choose justly and wisely. Even the Hamiltonian doctrine that government should be in the hands of the "eminent, learned, and rich" depends ultimately upon the wisdom of the people in choosing these superior beings.

Protestantism also is founded upon the expectation that the people can be trusted; that each person stands in his own right before God; that he not merely may, but must work out his own salvation, his own understanding of the truth, his own responsibility to his Master's kingdom. Recently, a Protestant preacher was exchanging ideas with a Roman Catholic priest. First, the priest presented the sacramentarian conception of the church and he did it with appreciation and understanding. He told of the privilege and joy of the priest in mediating through the sacraments of the church the gracious forgiveness and help of God, and in instructing and guiding his people in the sure way of trust and of God. Then the preacher presented the Protestant conception of the

church and of the preacher's work. He explained that he did not have, nor did he desire to have, the right of dictating to his people concerning what they should think or how they should act; that he was, rather, laboring to build into their lives the confidences and convictions and affections and experiences which would enable them to choose and to act as Christians of their own volition; that he wanted his people to be flowers that produce the beauty and perfume of holy lives rather than incense-holders that poured forth foreign products; that he desired them to be friends and not slaves of Jesus. The priest listened intently to what was apparently to him a new realm of ideas, and then ponderingly said: "It's all very beautiful, but it won't work. People cannot be trusted that far." Was he right? When we see the frequent abuses of "the law of liberty," we may well wonder.

How can we make sure that the common people may be trusted, that such disastrous misuses of opportunity as are illustrated by the multitude before the Prætorium may be avoided? Democracy and Protestantism stand or fall as safeguarded by several provisions.

The multitude must have education. They must have some grasp upon the accumulated knowledge and experience of the past, some realization of the conditions and movements of

the present, some understanding of man, his desires and methods. Our forefathers in the United States were clear visioned when they insisted on free public schools and made provision for them. The ballot, given to the people who remain in ignorance, would be likely to substantiate Byron's fling that "democracy is an aristocracy of blackguards." Democracy without an intelligent people may easily become a Quackocracy.

Our forms and methods of government need to be sufficiently simple that a citizen of ordinary intelligence can understand them, without unreasonable expenditure of time and effort. One of the present hold-outs of dishonest officials is the complexities and involutions of government. Two fundamental requirements of democratic government which are being dangerously violated to-day are, first definiteness of official power and responsibility, and, second, immediacy of amendability in case of misuse of power.

These same truths apply to the Protestant Church. Its people must be spiritually literate if they are to exercise advantageously the full rights of judgment and experience. Huxley remarked, "A man's worst difficulties begin when he is able to do as he likes," for he needs to learn to choose the good and the just. The ultimate test of the correctness of the Protestant con-

ception of individual liberty is the test of life; does it create Christlike living, and does it produce holy and stalwart and kindly Christians? This test cannot be met without intelligent understanding of the Bible, of Christian spirit and principles, of their application to present life, and of the various ways God leads his children.

The multitude must have leaders. Part of the tragic failure of the multitude at Jerusalem was due to the absence of *good* leaders. What if, at Pilate's first offer to release Jesus as his Passover largess, some person of influence, perhaps Joseph of Arimathæa or Nicodemus, had urged upon the excited people the claims of Jesus? One might select a dozen times in the events of that terrible day when a few capable leaders might have turned the flood. If the events of Calvary prove how evil men can lead the populace in evil ways, they also show how good men might have led it in opposite directions. These men who not merely make vocal but also dramatize and personify the higher principles and aspirations of a nation—our Washingtons and Lincolns and Garibaldis and Cromwells and Bolivars—are valuable beyond calculation.

It is very difficult, however, for a citizen who is making an earnest effort to follow the spirit

and the way of Jesus to *remain* in present-day municipal, or even state and national politics. We must have Christians who will give political leadership over a period of time; yet the compromises seemingly necessary to remain "in the game" are apt to be fatal to vital Christian purpose. It looks as though a drastic cleansing were necessary.

There is another disturbing question relating to leadership. In a day when consolidations, "chain stores," industrial and commercial organizations, and mechanized services are reducing the number and proportion of executives and increasing the number and proportion of order-takers and tenders of machines, we are marvelously increasing the enrollments in colleges and universities and insisting that the students must be taught initiative and self-direction. Many of these students, upon graduation, will have bitter experiences in fitting into an increasingly mechanized civilization. Perhaps they can find avocations in politics and churches which will afford opportunity for the self-expression denied them in commercial vocations.

One of the most useful missions of the church in the immediately succeeding years will be, not merely to teach the sacredness of the individual, but also to provide a place where he is supremely valued for his own sake and where he has opportunity for self-expression and develop-

ment. There is much in a city to make a man believe that he is valued about as he is valued by his fellow travelers in the subway, where he is conscious not merely that people do not need his presence but also that they would be much more comfortable without it. He feels that he would be missed about as much as a plate of salad at a cafeteria, where a dispassionate young woman waits to push another of exactly the same appearance and size into the place of the one taken.

The multitude must have unpolluted sources of information, a free press and a free platform, and more—a truthful and unbiased press and a truthful and unbiased platform. With the prevalence of the radio and the coming of television, the platform is more important than ever.

Since the World War we have become generally informed of the way in which people are mobilized for war. Not one government was guiltless of poisoning the sources of information. Perhaps the most indefensible act of that whole war was the German invasion of Belgium. It was sheer brute military aggression. But we have been told by one of their own scholars how the German people were "made to understand" and "strengthened"—"Hardly had the German armies entered Belgium when strange rumors

began to circulate. They spread from place to place and they soon penetrated the whole of Germany. It was said that the Belgium people . . . had intervened perfidiously in the hostilities, had attacked by surprise isolated detachments, had indicated to the enemy the positions occupied by troops. Public credulity accepted these stories. The highest powers in the state welcomed them without hesitation and indorsed them with their authority." Alas, similar propaganda persists in our own land, even in peace times.

For the present we are most concerned with the coloring, the playing up and the distortion of news. With some worthy exceptions, articles are blazingly headed or tucked into inconspicuous places, accounts are featured or ignored, details heightened or toned down, facts overstressed or omitted, in accordance with certain well-known prejudices and plans of the particular paper in which the article appears. News itself becomes more or less sheer propaganda, providing a most serious infringement on the need and the right of people to know the facts. It is certainly expected that editors will express their opinion and judgment in the editorial columns as ably and as strongly as they can, but the distortion of news in accordance with these opinions and judgments is traitorous to democracy.

The same truth applies to the Protestant Church. If our people are to be priests and prophets and workers in their own right, they also must have the facts. In many churches the members are seriously disturbed and frequently victimized because the preachers have failed to deal frankly with questions relating, for instance, to biblical scholarship or to church management. Is it asking too much that preachers and church officials be frank and honest?

The multitude must have religion. A young man recently knocked clamorously at a preacher's study door, and blurted out to the reluctant preacher, "Will you help me go to Northwestern University?" The preacher was experienced in the tricks of agents of all sorts, he himself having helped meet college expenses by honoring the farmers of Iowa with the opportunity of owning a copy of *Doctor Chase's Last and Complete Receipt Book and Household Compendium.* So he inquired, "I suppose you want me to subscribe to a magazine?"

The unshaven youth was somewhat taken aback by so direct a hit, but came back valorously with this statement, "No; I do not ask you to subscribe to a magazine. I merely offer to send you this magazine free of charge, if you will pay only the postage on it."

The preacher inquired, "But how will that

help you to go to Northwestern University?" and after some further fencing finally said, "Young man, if you have something to sell, why do you not sell it on its merits rather than with this sort of bunk?"

The reply came quickly and unguardedly, "Well, I have learned I have to do the other fellow before he does me."

Then, this final word from the preacher: "Young man, I would not give a farthing to help you go to college, but I would give considerable to keep you from college. A college education would only sharpen your wits better to prey upon mankind."

Education and information alone may curse a man and a nation. Unless they are used with a sense of responsibility to God and to man, with guiding principles of life, with the self-control that comes from established character, with the far vision, then education and information are useless, and good leadership impossible. The one source and assurance of these qualities is the religion of Christ. Pilate failed in the crisis of the trial of Jesus because fundamentally he lacked religion. For the same reason the multitude failed. Likewise will we fail if we have the same lack.

## CHAPTER XI

## THE ECCLESIASTICAL AND POLITICAL LEADERS

THERE is no doubt that the ecclesiastical and political leaders of Jerusalem, more than any others and more than all others, caused the death of Jesus.

Among these leaders were four major groups, the Pharisees and the scribes, the Sadducees and the chief priests. The Pharisees and the scribes had much in common, as had the Sadducees and the chief priests—including an ancient and bitter hatred of each other. Their hatred of Jesus is indicated by their willingness to forget animosities and to unite temporarily in an effort to rid themselves of this impudent upstart, this Galilæan peasant, called Jesus.

The Pharisees were the spiritual descendants (or perhaps, more fittingly, it should be written the spiritual degenerants) of Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Maccabees. Ezra and Nehemiah were horrified at the mixed marriages, the associations with the heathen of the land, and the lax observance of the Sabbath law among the people

rebuilding Jerusalem. They were the leaders of the strict party which set out to purify the contaminated Jews of their day. The Maccabees were that noble family who led the apparently hopeless revolt against Syria and preserved Jewish customs and religion from the overwhelming tidal wave of Greek culture.

There are few more heroic pages of history than those upon which is written the story of the Maccabean revolt against the determined efforts of Antiochus Epiphanes to bring Hellenic sweetness and light, as he considered, unto the narrow, forbidding, and crude life of Judæa. His efforts, however, cannot be accounted the methods of moderation and wisdom. He corrupted the priesthood, despoiled the Temple, and polluted the sanctuary, causing swine's flesh to be sacrificed on the holy altar as a final insult. He plundered both the Temple and the city, forbade sacrifices, ceremonies, and observances of religious festivals and customs, and pursued those who refused to obey as he would have pursued wild beasts. Those verses in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, usually thought of as referring to the Christian martyrs, refer rather to the faithful Hebrews of this Syrian persecution (the book of Hebrews was written when the Roman persecutions were present fact rather than history)—"and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds

and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth."

The Pharisees, however, had lost the nobilities and exaggerated the vices of their spiritual ancestors. One of the ironies of history is the frequency with which parties and organizations, noble in their inception, degenerate not only into useless, but into harmful groups. "Protests against error become errors in turn."

The Pharisees continued in the tradition of Ezra and Nehemiah and the Maccabees. They maintained stern opposition to all foreign elements and scrupulous observance of the Hebrew law. They were not a religious sect, inasmuch as they had no distinct rituals or meetings or places of worship, but were a closely knit religious party. They were interested only indirectly in political affairs, and then only as a means of gaining their religious ends.

The scribes, who are the same as "the lawyers" of the New Testament, formed a religious profession. They did not gain their livelihood from this profession since they were clearly forbidden to accept pay for their services; they worked at a trade to provide living expenses, but con-

sidered their religious work to be of much the greater importance. Originally, their first duty (as the name indicates) was to copy the Jewish manuscripts, but now it was to explain, interpret, apply, and teach the Jewish law. The judges of the land were usually chosen from their numbers. The synagogue was their place of peculiar power. The law was, they asserted, "God's greatest gift to Israel"—a complete revelation of God's will enabling one to live in finest detail the perfect way of life. Inasmuch as the law was originally designed for very different days than those of the first century, much ingenuity was required to make its regulations apply to all features of the life of that day. But of all qualities the scribes did not lack ingenuity! They were able to formulate elaborate regulations for the most minute matters of religious ritual and also of daily life. These scribes, on the whole, worked hand and glove with the Pharisees, "The Scribes of the Sadducees," though not unknown, being neither numerous nor influential.

The Sadducees were first a political party, and only in a lukewarm way a religious party. They were, in this—and in most ways—the reverse of the Pharisees. They were latitudinarians in religion, almost secularists. It may be suspected that their position on many re-

ligious questions was taken in order to be in opposition to the Pharisees, for they carried their religious convictions lightly. They denied the resurrection of the body, and (if Josephus is to be permitted to testify) all future rewards and punishments, perhaps even the existence of the soul. They emphasized freedom of the will in opposition to the predestinarism of the Pharisees. They denied the authority of the oral law, and refused to be bound by the technical niceties of the interpretations of the scribes. In politics, however, their main interest resided.

The Sadducees were the spiritual descendants of that party in Judæa which was in sympathy with the effort to introduce Greek culture and religion into their country. Antiochus Epiphanes had found some Jews, the "moderns" of that day, who, in utter impatience that their country was "so far behind the times," had already discarded their Jewish names and adopted Greek ones. They were soon named the Sadducees. They were deeply interested in the development and prosperity of their nation and believed in secular means of advancing its interests, in foreign alliances, in standing armies, in freedom of relations and contacts with other nations.

With the success of the Maccabean revolt, the Sadducees were in temporary eclipse, and the Pharisees in the sunlight. But the Maccabean kings soon found that the exigencies of govern-

ment made necessary co-operation with foreign rulers, a standing army, "profane" methods, and a worldly prudence to which the Pharisees could not consent. In a comparatively short time the Sadducees were again the advisers and helpers of the King. With some interruptions, for one hundred and fifty years they were the most influential Jewish group in the political life of their country. At the time of Jesus they had more confidence in Roman than in native rule, and co-operated with the Roman officials; the chief priests were chosen from their ranks; high officials of church and government, and probably a majority of the Sanhedrin were of their group. Whatever enterprise they were in, they usually landed in the king-row. Their advice about investments, real estate and political movements was sound in the wisdom of this world. They had "pull" and self-confidence, and they expected deference. They composed a small, well-knit, powerful, ambitious, aristocratic, wealthy group.

The functions of the chief priests, in connection with the Hebrew Temple, worship, rites, and sacrifices, are too commonly understood to need elaboration. They were, like the scribes, members of a religious profession, and had been chosen almost exclusively from the Sadducees.

Of these two groups of two, the Pharisees and

the scribes were at the time of Jesus by far the more popular with the people. There were a number of reasons for this. The Sadducees were proud and exclusive; the Pharisees came usually from lower ranks and cultivated the approval of the common people. The Sadducees favored Roman rule and co-operated with their officials; the Pharisees were patriotic, longed for political freedom, hated Roman rule—and the oppressed common people looked to them for relief from the political despotism which rested most heavily upon them. Strangely, too, the Pharisees were milder judges than the Sadducees, for, while the Pharisees believed in a much larger body of law than did their rivals, they were more adept in suggesting subterfuges and ethical loopholes. In addition, the self-imposed severity with which the Pharisees observed the letter and minutiæ of the law (losing no opportunity of making public demonstration of their strictness) caused them to be regarded by the common people with reverence and awe.

All four of these groups, composing the ecclesiastical and political leaders of Jerusalem, came to hate Jesus, and finally united in plotting and in achieving his terrible death. Their hatred is seen repeatedly in every step of the proceedings. They were of a race and group that or-

dinarily loved and observed justice, that rigidly followed legal regulations accurately calculated to protect the rights of an accused, yet in the trial of Jesus they violated almost every principle of justice and almost every legal regulation. Several books have been written setting forth these violations—false witnesses, the forced testimony of the accused against himself, illegal midnight sessions, doctored charges, judges and jury composed of accusers, illegal preliminary examinations, no time for collection or presental of evidence in defense, no communication with friends, ill-treatment before final convictions, reversed judgment permitted to stand, illegal penalty (a Roman penalty for violation of Jewish law). Only extreme hatred and fear could drive experienced, trained men to such extremes. The violence of their hatred, as expressed in their maledictions and tauntings in trial and crucifixion, is almost unbelievable. How could men, most of whom were reputed to be deeply pious and religious, hate Jesus to such a degree?

Consider the Sadducees first, for their attitude is the least involved. If these men of affairs had heard of Jesus in the earlier days of his ministry, they were evidently not concerned. Like Herod, they were too busy in matters they considered worth while to gossip about a penni-

less village prophet who was talking about taking no anxious thought for the morrow, and forgiving enemies, and laying up treasures in heaven. "Who knows anything about heaven, anyway?" they might have wittily asked; "for ourselves, we will take the gold and the jewels here where we are sure of them." The only time they gave any consideration to Jesus was when there was circulated an account of the way he had scorched the Pharisees. Ah, that was good!

But one day startling word came that this so-called prophet had had the presumption to overturn the tables of the money-changers in the Temple, to rebuke established and profitable business enterprises, and even to threaten the trading agents of these very Sadducees. "What are things coming to," we might have heard them wail, "when prophets refuse to mind their own affairs, when they talk about things they know nothing about, disturb business, and arouse the populace against legitimate enterprise?"

On top of this rude awakening came information about certain foolish claims that this same creature was making. "He claims to be a Messiah, ushering in a new kingdom." "What will the Romans think about that?" "That fellow needs to be hushed up." Then came news that the multitude in a strange frenzy of excitement had acclaimed him as Messiah, putting

down garments and palm branches for his beast to walk on, aping the pomp given a Roman conqueror! Then, the Sadducees realized that no time was to be lost. "The Romans will come and take both our place and our nation." There we have it, in a sentence. "Is it not expedient that one man shall die rather than that he should lead the people, fed on fantastic hopes, to bring the Roman army upon us?" And the word "our place" is not to be forgotten. The Sadducees were in the saddle; they had influence and prosperity; change threatened their prerogatives and position. So the decision is that this Jesus must be put where he can create no more disturbance.

The opposition of the scribes and Pharisees to Jesus was of longer standing and deeper than that of the Sadducees.

Unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees had deep religious convictions, and, what is more, had given public expression to these convictions. The whole tenor of Jesus' teachings and life cut directly across these beliefs and customs. He taught that God was a loving heavenly Father who rejoiced in spontaneous goodness and kindness and forgiveness, rather than a tyrant who demanded mechanical observance of petty, useless regulations. This Father, Jesus taught, not only gladly welcomed any repentant sinner but even sought him upon the mountainside, giving

scant consideration to elaborated externalities. Jesus insisted that righteousness must be more than that external display, that love and purity and forgiveness must abide in the innermost being. He depreciated displays of piety that consisted of show prayers and sanctimonious looks. All of this, and much more, shook the house of the scribes and Pharisees to the foundations.

In addition, Jesus made claims—such as that of forgiving sins—which these sticklers for accuracy could not abide. He also associated with publicans and sinners and permitted harlots to approach him publicly. He was indifferent to cherished ceremonial purification and technical Sabbath observance, to ritualistic fussiness and elaborated conventions.

Still worse, Jesus openly rebuked the Pharisees. Such parables as the Pharisee and the publican, the wicked husbandman who killed the heir, the great supper with no guests, cut to the quick. He declared that publicans and harlots were entering the kingdom of heaven, while they, in haughty self-righteousness, remained without. He called them "whited sepulchers," "blind guides," "offspring of vipers and serpents."

The Pharisees were also clearly jealous of the popularity of Jesus with the people, and his influence with them. Unlike the Sadducees

and the higher priests, who cared little for what the multitude thought, the Pharisees coveted power with the people. They would gladly "compass sea and land to make one proselyte." From their point of view Jesus was ignorant and unschooled, a layman intruding upon the territory of the scribes and themselves; yet the people flocked after him, "heard him gladly," and chuckled loudly when, with surgical accuracy, he revealed the hypocrisies of these pompous mystifiers of simple truths.

Jesus also, as in the case of the Sadducees, threatened the very foundations of their authority and influence. If one were able to add to the law such words as "But *I* say unto you," and if God were not at all concerned with the niceties of the Jewish law, where, then, was the profession of interpreting that law and judging people in accordance with it, and where the glory of those who observed these technicalities with an awesome rigidity? Sometimes it is said that the Pharisees and scribes rejected Jesus because they did not understand him. The opposite is the fact—they understood him too well; they sensed clearly that the success of his teachings meant their downfall. The Pharisees and scribes did what most men of all ages would have done when their prerogatives and position and livelihood were at stake. They fought desperately.

A large amount of the tolerance that people

have for critics is based on one of two confidences —either that the matter criticised is unimportant, or that the critic is not powerful enough to make headway. One reason why many folks are so tolerant in matters of religion is that they think differences in religion do not matter. Is it not instructive to note that some people who preach tolerance in religion with beautiful generosity fiercely insist that communists should be jailed or deported, and Russia smashed? Religion may not matter to them—but political radicalism does most decidedly. Few people are big enough to favor anything or anyone that threatens personal or family disadvantage, even if the gain to others is considerable.

It is not suggested that the enemies of Jesus thought through their attitude of hostility. Like most of us, they never honestly faced their antagonism. Probably they never admitted to themselves that they considered their position in danger. It was "the cause" for which they battled. Under our faithful and unselfish battling for our "causes" how much of prejudice and jealousy, of selfish fear and egotism is hidden! Let him that is guiltless throw the first stone at the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees!

## CHAPTER XII
## THE ROMAN SOLDIERS

THE Roman soldiers bowed before Jesus in mock reverence and derisive honor, and thereby passed harsh sentence on themselves. Roman soldiers are more generally remembered and judged for the part they played in the trial and death of Jesus than for all else they ever did—and they have much of evil and some of good for which to be accounted responsible. This cluster of unnamed satellites, at which we can look with unshaded eyes, may help us to understand better the pull and power and glory of the central sun.

Until about two and a half centuries before the death of Jesus the Roman army was composed of the residents of Rome and its environs who left their booths and farms and work benches upon call of their magistrates to help meet some national peril or to advance the interests of their home city. They were not professional soldiers attracted by hope of pillage, easy gain, and exciting life, but amateur soldiers fulfilling an obligation, anxious, having performed their duty, to return to their city.

By the time mentioned, however, the residents of Rome were increasingly reluctant to leave their easy life for the hardihood of foreign cam-

paigns, and increasingly incapable of enduring rigorous military exertion. They had, therefore, invented many means of avoiding the service, though the need of soldiers was greater than ever. The boundaries of the empire, which must be guarded, were dangerously extended; the population of Rome was enlarged both in size and in indolence, at the very time that the cultivation of grain in Italy was on the decrease, so that the forced flow of food needed to be protected and accelerated. The demand for slaves, for the precious wares and delicacies of Mesopotamia, India, and China, was noisily increasing, and more soldiers were required to open and maintain trade routes. The appetite of Rome for easy wealth, confiscated in wars of conquest, was insatiable.

In consequence, by the time of Jesus, the Roman army was well established on a professional basis. The soldiers enlisted for fifteen, twenty, and twenty-five years, in accordance with the branch of service. Military life had to be made attractive. The wages were about the same as a laborer received at hardest toil, but the work was ordinarily rather light, and the opportunity for spoil and promotion was considerable. Among the rural classes the gain in prestige and power was attractive. On retirement from service the soldier received a grant of land or a bounty sufficient to provide a home

and to raise a family. The long-continued agricultural depression in Italy, due to receipts of grain from Sicily, Egypt, and North Africa, and the competition of slave labor caused many small landowners as well as free laborers to look favorably upon the army. A similar depression in all trades, likewise due to slave competition, had much the same result among the artisans of Rome, who were never firmly established. The army at the time of the crucifixion was made up, therefore, largely of farm laborers, small rural landowners, artisans and laborers of Rome and its Italian territories, with a sprinkling of members of higher classes forced by misfortune into the ranks. Auxiliary legions from the provinces were numerous, but may be disregarded since they would not have been intrusted with keeping order in so important and so turbulent a city as Jerusalem.

This professional army before the time of Jesus had proved its power. It had already made and unmade emperors. Usually its divisions were devoted to their individual commanders, so long as they provided pleasures, opportunity to sack conquered cities, and to massacre and enslave vanquished populations. Sometimes, however, a legion, or a smaller unit, remained at a given station, such as Jerusalem, for years, the tedium of garrison duty being relieved by an occasional campaign.

It is quite the fashion to excuse the soldiers for their part in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. We are told that they were only pawns in the game, and not responsible for the cruel work ordered by their superiors. Those wondrous words of Jesus, which include all those responsible for the foul deed—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"—are sometimes interpreted as referring only to the soldiers, in order to make it appear that Jesus considered them guiltless.

A verse in Matthew makes such leniency doubtful—"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Prætorium, and gathered unto him the whole band." There follow the stripping, the pressing of the crown of thorns, the mockings, spitting and strikings—those indignities which make us gasp with horror. The words "and gathered unto him (Jesus) the whole band" are revealing and revolting. Not one of the cohort must miss the sport, making a mockery of the pretended king of the Jews! There is no record that the soldiers scourged Jesus (Pilate himself probably did that as an official act), but they did abuse him cruelly.

They thus treated Jesus not for the pleasure of the Jews, since previously the "soldiers took Jesus into the Prætorium," which no orthodox Jew would enter just before the Passover. It was done for the particular and peculiar pleas-

ure of the soldiers themselves. Nor had Jesus caused them any special work or inconvenience which might excite their spite against him. He had been as harmless to them as one could possibly be. There was not the slightest excuse for such gratuitous abuse, nor for the joy taken in it. The soldiers cannot be accounted guiltless.

There is, of course, the extenuating fact that these soldiers lived in a cruel age. Augustus, emperor a few years before, found it necessary to have enacted a law that prætors should give gladiatorial shows only twice a year, and with never more than one hundred and twenty combatants. There was no limit, however, upon private combats, in which battles of one hundred pairs of gladiators were common. Augustus himself gave eight spectacles in which a total of ten thousand fought, and Claudius staged a reproduction of a naval victory in which nineteen thousand combatants, all condemned criminals, fought on either side with cruel carnage. Such proceedings were imitated throughout the provinces. King Agrippa, before whom Paul pleaded, set all the condemned criminals of his land, numbering fourteen thousand, fighting at one time in his amphitheater at Berytus.

Then, too, the soldier's occupation is a cruel one. His motto is not merely an eye for an eye, but a head for an eye, an arm for a finger,

a hundred lives for one life. Bloodshed and suffering are all in the day's work to be suffered or to be inflicted with scarce a thought. Avoiding the exaggeration of many, we still realize that present generations are yet reaping the brutalizing effect of the World War upon our soldiers. The writer will never forget a certain soldier who told of killing a man with a bayonet. He spoke something like a Russian soldier who wrote: "Now I fear neither God nor the devil. After I had stuck a bayonet into a man's stomach, it was as if something had fallen away from me." An English lad, veteran of three years in combat division, who avoided all reference to the war, explained by saying that whenever he thought of those years he saw dead bodies piled up like cord wood. It is not only defeat in war that is disastrous and to be feared and avoided; it is war itself, whatever the outcome, that is the enemy of all that is high and holy. One who spends his efforts in preparing a nation for war so that it may not be defeated is selecting a hopeless task, for all are now defeated in war, victors and vanquished alike. Such a one is also failing to enter the real battle, which is not to prevent defeat but to prevent war. "The alternative to peace is not war—it is annihilation." It is a deep concern for all of us; the net may now be spread so wide that we may not realize that we are victims in a cruel trap,

but let the tocsins sound, and the net will be drawn close.

Many are exceedingly wise, in their own opinion, in declaring that man is a fighting animal, who, whatever the costs and the dangers, must have his extravagance of war. Man is a fighting animal, but he is much more than that. He is also a thinking animal, that would supplant brute force with reason. He is a frugal animal, not content to destroy in a moment the results of generations of effort. He is a co-operative animal, happier in companionship than in strutting isolation. He is a sympathetic animal, ill-content to see women and children suffer and men crippled and killed. He is also a spiritual creature, called to a common brotherhood by a Father who includes persons of all races in his interest and love.

Our conclusion, keeping all the extenuating facts in mind, is that we cannot exonerate the soldiers of all blame for their cruelty. They lived in a cruel day and were engaged in brutal business, yet they possessed qualities, however hidden, which should have made impossible their common delight in a scene so terrible that it is burned by horror upon our trembling memories. They might, at the least, have done something other than gamble for the poor clothing of Jesus while three fellowmen were racked in the first agonies of crucifixion! We are instructed by

the Master to ask forgiveness for "our sins"—and the pronoun "our" contrasts not merely with a possible "my" which would fail to recognize the share of others in sin, but also with a possible "their" which would fail to recognize personal responsibility for sin. The soldiers must incur some blame.

It is not clear that even the centurion can be credited with as clear a change of attitude toward the Crucified as that with which he is usually honored. The statement in Mark is much in his favor, "And when the centurion, who stood by over against him [or who stood facing him] saw that he so gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was a Son of God" [marginal reading]. But the statement in Matthew is quite different—"Now the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, when they saw the earthquake, and the things that were done"—the opening of the tombs, etc. —"feared exceedingly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God." In this account, it appears that the centurion and the soldiers were unaffected by what they had seen of Jesus, were free of any regrets for their abuse of him, but were thoroughly frightened by the earthquake and other unusual occurrences. In fact, even Mark does not indicate any particular contrition on their part. As the two authors apparently

do not agree in estimating the cause and consequently the depth of the change of attitude, we gain little light from the incident, and are not justified in exalting the centurion.

Even though the soldiers had merely obeyed the orders of superiors, they could not escape blame, for they might have refused to have any part in the nefarious proceedings. True, any one soldier who refused would perhaps have been punished with death, and the whole cohort, had it balked, might have suffered the same penalty; but many people in history have been willing to die in lesser causes.

Should a man refuse to obey his political superiors when their orders conflict with his conscience, or to reject even the decisions of his own state?

Of course no organization of human beings can exist unless there be a willingness frequently to subordinate personal preference and inclination and opinion to the common good. In the local church we are constantly pleading for active co-operation in decisions and plans to which some cannot give full approval. In the home we are schooled to submerge inclination into the common welfare, and also to submerge judgment and minor questions of conscience. Because the state is a grouping of vastly more numerous and diverse individuals than either of

the other groups, it is not often that one can give the complete approval of his judgment and conscience to its ways. To attain order without despotism and freedom without anarchy is the fundamental dilemma of government, and, in fact, of any organization.

But the time may come to an individual in any group when he must refuse longer to consent to certain decisions or to co-operate in certain enterprises. He can go far in submerging himself for the common good, but beyond some certain point he cannot go and retain his manhood. Where that point is cannot be stated dogmatically. It varies with individuals and with circumstances. The only people who deny him that right are the ecclesiastics of the Roman Catholic Church and the Bourbons who claim the supremacy of the state.

Even Scripture is quoted to complete our entire subjection to the state, particularly Jesus' words, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." But Jesus is not stating, on this occasion, what "things" are Cæsar's and what "things" are God's—in fact, that is exactly what, for the avoidance of a trap, he is evading. When the things of God and the things of Cæsar do come in conflict, there can be no question regarding the teachings of the Master—"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not

worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." At all events, when we count the "things" that belong to God, is not Norman Thomas correct in suggesting that conscience is included?

A statement from the Epistle to the Romans is frequently quoted for the same purpose—"Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; and the *powers* that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God." When we recall that Paul, who was a regular jail-bird, wrote these words, we realize that he did not intend to give any injunction subordinating Christian conscience even unto "the higher powers." (The insertion of the word "higher" shows a qualification of his exhortation). He finally gave his life rather than to obey a state that refused him the right to worship and to preach Christ. His attitude agrees with that of Peter and the apostles who answered when charged by the high priest and the Jewish council (no "higher powers" a Jew could know) to cease teaching in the name of Jesus, "We must obey God rather than men." And what will we do with the book of Revelation, which was written primarily to strengthen the persecuted Christians of a dark day in their

refusal to bow down to the beast of Roman power? There can be no question but that the Christian gives his first and last allegiance to God, and his understanding of God's way.

When Thoreau was in jail because he refused to support the war with Mexico, he was visited by Emerson. "David," he said in dismay, "why are you here?" The dour Thoreau answered, "Why are you *not* here?" Perhaps that question may be fairly asked of some of us Christians in view of suppressions of speech, and raidings of strike headquarters, and unjust court proceedings, and squandered millions of taxes, and discriminative legislation, and alliances of police power with evil forces, and war engenderings.

The safety of the nation requires a stalwart criticism of wrong policies and, as a last resort, a refusal to submit to evil exactions. The state is not an end itself, but a means for establishment of justice, for maintenance of liberty and security, for united action in providing for some common needs and for the common protection. Its permanence and stability are largely dependent upon the effectiveness with which it attains these objectives. Open criticism, and even courageous defiance, is tremendously valuable to the state itself. If the objection is well taken, the state will be greatly aided; if it is not, then freedom of speech, as Bishop McConnell says, is well balanced by freedom of

listeners to refuse to listen. The use of force indicates that the criticisms cannot be fairly met by facts and arguments. Loyalty to a nation, to its people, its ideals, and its future, may force one to criticize present executives or laws, or perhaps even to criticize forms of government. To revert to Thoreau—"In an age of injustice the only place for a just man is in prison." Why are not more preachers, temporarily at least, in prison? Why did not one of the soldiers refuse to help drive those shameful nails?

There is an interesting paragraph in a radical and revolutionary document, which, while it is not now highly regarded in some quarters, is worthy of remembrance. "Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light or transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations . . . evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such a government, and to provide new guards for their future security." The paragraph is from the Declaration of Independence of the North American colonies, and was written by a certain Thomas

Jefferson, sometime President of these United States.

The same principles apply to decisions of daily life. To what extent should a stenographer, or a salesman, a clerk, or any lesser employee, obey orders that are contrary to their moral convictions? If each individual in an organization should demand that the total business be conducted in accordance with his personal judgments of right and wrong, chaos would result. Usually we must do our work faithfully, depending upon other folks to do likewise—else no engineer would run his train until assured that each passenger was on legitimate business, and no physician would save life until satisfied that the person to be treated was a useful citizen.

Yet there is a point beyond which a Christian may not go in co-operating with that which violates his conscience. In modern life, with shelter and food, for self and family, frequently at stake, the danger is that one will continue to acquiesce at serious moral price. More holy daring for God, and conscience is desperately needed. One of the most discouraging features of our commercial and political life is that professed Christians (or should it be professional Christians?) easily consent to glaring injustices and dishonesties, and so far as daily ethics are concerned, are almost indistinguishable from non-Christians.

## CHAPTER XIII

## THE WOMEN WHO STOOD BY THE CROSS

Some of the satellites who had yielded to the tender attractiveness of the Central Sun, continued without deviation on their new-found courses even during those last hours when the heavens were falling and the face of the sun blotted out. These who faltered not were women.

All the men closest to Jesus failed him ingloriously at the last. John has the cleanest record, but even he fell asleep in Gethsemane, left Jesus "and fled" at the arrest, followed him "afar off" with Peter, watched the illegal and insulting examination in the very court of the high priest, without sound of protest, followed closely all the awful events culminating in the crucifixion without one despairing cry of allegiance, and, even after he had entered the empty tomb, went back hopeless and disillusioned to the old life of a fisherman, from which, strangely stirred, he had been called in happier days. John was the one man in the group near the cross of Jesus. He had temporarily recovered from his panic. But the others who stood by the cross were women.

It was not utterly dark on Calvary. The

blackness of hatred and revenge and bigotry and pride did not completely shroud that hill. The dying malefactor broke the gloom by his unexpected appeal to Jesus. A goodly number of women—Mark states "many women"—also brought a glow of love in that darkest day of human history by silently standing near that suffering figure on the cross.

We are told that these women stood at a distance from the cross; probably they clustered as near to their condemned friend as they could without uselessly attracting the angry attention of the mob and the alert suspicion of the soldiers. They were close enough to be recognized by Jesus and to hear him speak. It is likely, as the darkness deepened, as curiosity and hatred were sated, the slow tedium of a long death providing little thrill, that the multitude slowly melted away, allowing the fearful but loyal group of women to edge closer and closer to their dying friend. And at last, since the cross was much lower than is usually pictured, they could look almost straight into his agonizing eyes. They were trembling women, considered so helpless that their presence was increasingly tolerated.

These women could do nothing for their Master, but they could be by his side in his agony. There are those so understanding and chivalrous that they are sure to be near when

trouble crushes down a friend, even though they can neither say anything nor do anything. And their bare presence is soothing comfort. The art of silence is a great art, almost a forgotten one in friendship both with God and with man. Too much we think that worship and conversation not filled with din of multiplied words are dull and futile. Sometimes so much is to be said that no word can be uttered, and a tender look, a gesture, an attitude, a grip of the hand, must staggeringly bear the weighted thought. This was such a time, when no word could express the crushing agony of fellow-suffering, when friends could only stand as near as possible to the cross in dumb, silent grief.

It is terrible to die alone and unbefriended; to face hard-pressing, remorseless death without loved ones standing by. Could it be possible that one who had such genius for friendship as Jesus had would be deserted by all his ardent companions when he was publicly dying, and dying such a death? Jesus had drawn to himself such a wealth of friends! It would be unbelievable that at least a few would not find some trackless way to his side in his extremity. These women vindicate friendship. We glory in their fidelity. Ought we not to give ourselves more and more to that fair ambition of so loving and being loved that we shall be rich in those spiritual companionships which are of such in-

effable help in ordinary life and in deepest crisis?

Two of this group were kin to Jesus—his mother and his mother's sister, Salome, who was the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John. Salome was present partly to help her stricken sister, but she was a disciple of her prophet nephew, being mentioned in Mark as one who, when he was in Galilee, "followed him and ministered unto him." Her relationship with the Master was sufficiently intimate to enable her to make with confidence an uncomprehending plea that her sons should hold the chief places in the new kingdom, when it was established. She was not a young woman, for her two sons were grown men when they were called by Jesus, but she was not too old to catch a new vision and to venture much for it. She not only encouraged her sons in what appeared to many a will-o'-the-wisp, but became herself obedient to the heavenly vision. Perhaps she was not happy at first, when her two sons deserted the fishing boats to follow the strange Prophet, and turned back upon the tired, aging shoulders of Zebedee the hard toil and management of the business. Whatever irritation she may have felt had been overcome and she had herself become a follower and helper of the new Master.

And what about Zebedee? He lost the help of his sons, and also, for part of the time, the presence and help of his wife. Not only did his sons leave him and the business, but we may be sure that frequently Salome, too, was off carrying and preparing supplies for Jesus and for her two sons. Perhaps she seemed to be home only long enough to select new supplies from Zebedee's stores! And Zebedee plodded along, without sons and wife, shouldering triple duty, perhaps even grinding his own barley and preparing his own meals, maintaining the business and the home, and providing a base of supplies for the Master and his disciples. Noble, hornyhanded Zebedee! Many are his counterparts to-day.

The only place for a mother when her son is dying is by his side. To reach it, no matter whether the son be a vicious criminal or a hero, a mother will cross mountains and seas and face all dangers without complaint, except as they delay her presence at the place of her heart's desire.

And this son was only thirty-three—and her first-born! It had been only three years since he had been living under the same roof with his mother, sharing the same humble fare, dividing the responsibilities and hopes and disappointments. Does not that maiden vision of years ago appear again and again to this watching

mother as she endures those straining hours on Calvary—an angel who sings, "Hail thou that art highly favored, the Lord *is* with thee. . . . For thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus"? Do not the words of that other angel come back to her, "And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins"? Do not the shepherds appear again in that glorious stable, and the Wise Men, and all those strange events which she had kept, "pondering them in her heart"? How many pictures of her golden-haired, dimpled baby; of her happy, chubby boy; of her gleeful, growing youth; of her trusted, surprising Son, flicker back and forth upon the screen of her keenly aroused memory? And was it all for this end? Can she endure this contrast between her hopes and this desperate consummation?

Little is told in the Gospels about the relationships between this mother and her son. But we do have some incidents that reveal much.

One of them occurred at the marriage feast in Cana. When Jesus' mother, who had some position of responsibility at the feast, learned that the wine was exhausted, she turned not to the host and hostess but at once to her Son. She had learned by many experiences through the years, to look to him when some disaster needed

to be averted, with complete trust in his understanding and kindness and adequacy. "They have no wine," was all she said; yet mother and son were in such mental unison that Jesus knew the words contained an appeal and an expectation—an appeal and an expectation which assumed much. Startled by the look and the inflection which told far more than words, he drew back. "Woman"—the address contained no shadow of discourtesy, but is a declaration that in some decisions a mother's claim must not be urged—"Woman, what have you to do with me?" And then he added, as he saw that she discerned more than he had expected, "Mine hour is not yet come." The rebuff was clear, but the mother could only be silenced; her hope and her expectation could not be stifled. She knew her Son better and deeper perhaps than he knew himself. Turning quietly to the servants she said—does not the Son hear?—"Whatever he says to you, do it"! She was saying: "He seems to say that he will not help, but I know him too well to accept that decision. Stay close by him and the threatened disgrace will be averted." Thus this mother understood her Son who was just entering his calling, and encouraged him by her great expectation of him.

The occasion on which the brethren and the mother of Jesus came seeking him is sometimes urged as proof that there was lack of sympathy

between Jesus and his mother. It proves rather the opposite. It would be strange if the mother did not partly share the panic and confusion of the family regarding those disconcerting reports about her Son. Perhaps she did even desire to recall him from what she considered his delusion, recall him to his former happy place and work. Jesus saw on this dramatic occasion that it was necessary to choose between the desire of his family for him and the call of God to his mission. He faced that desperately hard decision, when love to a parent and devotion to a calling collide head-on. He definitely chose the latter, but the choice brought deep-lying pain. Turning away from his mother, with a gesture so passionate and meaningful that it is recorded in the Gospel narratives, he announces to his followers that those who do the will of God are to him "brother and sister and mother." The fact that he is so deeply stirred by the necessity of making such a decision shows the deep love that continued to bind mother and Son together. She may have misunderstood him. He may have passed beyond her ken. But both continued to love.

And this mother is one of the women who stood by the cross.

Two other women whose names we know stood by the cross. They were Mary Magdalene

and Mary, wife of Cleopas and mother of James the younger and of Joses.

Of this second Mary we have no information except that she, with Mary Magdalene, watched the burial of Jesus, and, coming later with spices to the empty tomb, saw the "two men . . . in dazzling apparel," who joyously asked, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

Much conjecture has clustered about Mary Magdalene. The repeated designation "Magdalene" indicates that she came from Magdala, but it may indicate more. For Magdala was a city of evil reputation, and, according to the Talmud, was destroyed for harlotry. The statement that Jesus cast seven demons out of her may also suggest—seven being the complete number—entire abandonment to what has been considered this most hopeless sin of womankind. There are these indications that Mary Magdalene had been a harlot, and was liberated from her bondage by Jesus; but these indications fall far short of proof.

Mary Magdalene is the only woman mentioned in each of the three Gospel records that include the names of the women who stood by the cross. Evidently, her presence made more impression than that of any other woman; even more, apparently, than the presence of the mother of Jesus, who is mentioned only in John. In fact, whenever Mary Magdalene is named in the

Gospels, in this and in other connections, she is always placed first. In an exquisite account in the Gospel of John, we are told that the risen Lord, whom she, weeping, mistook for the gardener, made his first appearance to Mary Magdalene. All in all, she was a highly interesting and favored woman of whom we wish we knew more. What a treasure and illumination would be a Gospel that was written by her!

We can, with probability, rescue the name of yet another woman who was one of that gallant band who stood by the cross. Joanna, wife of Herod's steward, is named as one of the women who ministered to Jesus with Mary Magdalene on his second preaching tour through Galilee; again, she is mentioned as one who, following the crucifixion, went with spices to the startling tomb where they "found not the body of the Lord Jesus." Though not definitely named, she was in this same group some time before the crucifixion, and immediately after. It seems safe to include her, therefore, as one of the "many other women that came up with him to Jerusalem," and stood by the cross.

The records about these women give a clear clue to the way in which the physical wants of Jesus and his apostles were partly supplied during his ministry. In Luke we are told that during the early portion of the second year of his work,

"Certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities . . . ministered unto them"—or perhaps it should be "unto him"—"of their substance." At least one and probably more of the same women came with him on the last journey to Jerusalem, stood by him at the cross, and prepared to care for his body after his death. In Mark also we are told that the group of women who were at the crucifixion, "when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him." In Matthew we find a like statement: "And many women were there . . . who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him." It may be assumed, then, that a group of women, of whom four or five, with Mary Magdalene at their head, were the continuing members, cared for the physical needs of the Master, and perhaps of his apostles as well, during much of his ministry.

Jesus did not, therefore, depend upon his trade for his living, as Paul did. He gladly accepted the food, the personal services and probably the clothing gratefully provided by these women who had gained light and life through him. Jesus trusted God without anxiety for his simple needs. He was victoriously confident that his heavenly Father, who fed the birds of the heavens, who clothed the herbage of the field, who arrayed the lilies in all their glory, would also care for him and his. And God did

supply the needs of his Anointed One—not, by magic, however, but by the labors of these alert and devoted women.

Though Jesus on his journeys received the food and the care of those who gladly assumed the not inconsiderable responsibility and toil, he did not, however, depend exclusively and continuously upon them. When he was in Jerusalem, the house of Lazarus and Martha and Mary at Bethany was home to him. When he was in Capernaum, Peter's house was clearly his home at this center of his labors, and was freely and frequently used. He was often entertained in other homes, so many times, indeed, that he was accused of being gluttonous. Sometimes he even assumed an invitation, as he did with Zacchæus. When distant from such homes he did not always call upon his women helpers, for we are told that Jesus remained by Jacob's Well while the apostles "were gone . . . to buy food." We also know from the phrase, "and forgot to take bread," that on occasion the apostles carried their own supplies.

It is suggestive to know that the personal interest and service which has been so constantly characteristic of women in the church began when Jesus walked in Galilee. Partly because they were accustomed to anticipate his ordinary wants, they were constrained to go with him and to serve him on the last fearsome journey to

Jerusalem, and to be at his side at the dreaded end. Their hands could no longer render any service, but their silent, loving presence could bring comfort.

How beautiful that the suffering Saviour had the comfort of their presence! Jesus had his Judas, his Pilate, his Herod, his Barabbas, his ecclesiastical superiors; but he had also this faithful group that stood by the cross. And all but one of them were women!

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE CENTRAL SUN—ITS SURPASSING GREATNESS

To most people on that despairing day of the crucifixion Jesus was only a troublesome but quickly burned-out meteor; or, at the most, he was a disappearing comet soon to be forgotten. Even his immediate followers mourned him that day as a failure—a deeply loved failure, but none the less a failure. How radically that estimate has been reversed! That momentary meteor is become the central sun of our universe. That rejected stone is become "the chief stone of the corner."

Why has judgment regarding Jesus so marvelously changed? What is the secret of his surpassing and increasingly recognized greatness? Why has he become through the generations the central sun to which not merely the people connected with the crucifixion, but all others are satellites?

Partly because the world has recognized in Jesus the incomparable teacher of life.

Some of us have a more or less distinct remembrance of a book that threatened to "expose

Jesus." It was supposed to be an exceedingly wise book, particularly by the man who wrote it. In it the author tried to prove that Jesus was not at all an original thinker or teacher. As memory recalls it, he placed in parallel columns some of the greatest sayings of Jesus and certain similar sayings of great non-Christian thinkers, claiming that the comparison showed that Jesus did not have any particular originality, either as teacher or as thinker. That critic failed to see what a supreme compliment he paid Jesus when he compared his sayings with the most brilliant utterances of all the non-Christian geniuses he could assemble. Even so, it could have been rather easily proved from the very comparisons he entered, that the sayings of Jesus were superior to those of others. There was this other important factor that the author was not taking into consideration. All of us might appear very wise if somebody should select that which is best out of the volubility of our speech and writings, omitting the drivelings and commonplacenesses, and exalting that which has some vision of truth. It is one thing occasionally to express a truth that is worth stating, and another thing to be able to drive down to bedrock truth. We are impressed not only by what Jesus said, but also by what he did not say. He uttered the fundamental truths of all life, he dovetailed those truths into a unity, he presented

the working principle and spirit of all relationships of man, both with man and God.

It is one thing to emit a flash of lightning that temporarily dispels the darkness, and it is another thing to be the sun that permanently banishes the gloom. It is one thing to catch a haunting strain of music; it is another to weave the most beautiful strains of all music into a glorious symphony. It is one thing to disclose bits of nourishing food in a mass of stones and serpents; it is another to provide a rich and wholesome banquet that satisfies the fundamental needs of life, for all people, for all time. The latter is exactly what Jesus did and does.

It is a far-reaching fact about Jesus, that every age of religious insight has, as we say to-day, rediscovered in Jesus its peculiarly needed message. Some scholars and preachers make much of what they call our present-day rediscovery of him, and well they may; but what we have done each spiritually discerning age has done—it has found in Jesus, the comfort, the warning, the vision, the spirit, the motives, the objectives, the principles essential for that day. Except in stagnant periods, each generation has learned that the phrases and interpretations of the previous generations are unfitted for its needs and has expressed its faith in its own metaphor and wording; whereupon it has been apt to feel that, in distinction from its

fathers, it has found the Christ. But it has merely found in him that never slacking "well of water springing up unto eternal life." Jesus, dealing with the basic truths of life rather than with the machinery of life, is the teacher of the ages.

In Jesus is found eternal truth about life, and about God and about the relationship of man to man and man to God; and more is found, for in him we have that truth so presented that it reaches conscience and heart and will and definitely changes life. It is one thing to speak the truth; it is another thing to speak it in such a fashion that it grips people and inspires them. The glory of truth belongs not so much to the person who first gives it utterance as to the person who first gives it power. Jesus gave his truth power in the lives of people in his own generation and down through the ages.

Daniel Webster was once asked how he explained the monumental oration that he delivered in reply to Hayne, when he gave final answer to those willing to disrupt the Union. He said: "It is all very simple. A smoking thunderbolt came by and I grabbed it, and hurled it at him." His metaphor was an oratorical way of saying that the concentrated thought, and study, and practice of a lifetime were fused into that one historic speech. That is something of what we find in Jesus—it is as though the

experience and the wisdom of all men and all ages are fused and vitalized in those great words by which Jesus brings his teachings to the world.

Jesus has been exalted because of what he taught and also because of what he did.

In one of his poems Robert Burns wrote an epitaph. It is generally considered that in these words he was writing his own epitaph, his judgment regarding himself.

"Is there a man whose judgment clear,
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs himself life's mad career
Wild as the wave?

"Here pause, and through the starting tear
Survey this grave.

"The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know
And keenly felt the kindly glow
And softer flame.

"But thoughtless folly laid him low,
And stained his name."

There have been many people who could tell much about life but could not fulfill their teachings in their own lives. Jesus was a man living at his best in accordance with the standards that he presented of life and of relationship to God.

Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, a leader among the

reformed Congregations of Jews during the previous generation, the man after whom Hirsch Center in Chicago is named, is the author of a book called *My Religion.* In that book he presents one of the few criticisms of Jesus ever offered by a spiritually discerning person. He says that Jesus could hardly be counted the ideal man because he was never a husband and never a father. A little thought reveals that this is captious criticism. One person cannot live the experiences of every person. Jesus in one human life could not be both father and mother or brother and sister; he could not be all of life rolled into one life. But he could and did do this: he could and he did exhibit in his life the principles, and the spirit, and the attitude that will solve the problems of life for any individual in any place. That is, he exemplified and personified in his life that spirit which is necessary for every person in every sphere of living, if life is to be genuinely and completely a victory. He maintained this high achievement even when it headed into stark death.

Jesus believed completely in kindness, helpfulness, goodness, trust toward God and man. He believed that these qualities would "work" in the world of affairs, and that they, and they alone, would prove adequate for any situation. He believed that in the end people would respond joyously to one who personified such principles

and confidences. He believed that the abundant, the completed, the eternal life was found in loving God and man, and in forgetting self in serving them; that the superior person was the useful person; that to lose life in humble helpfulness was to gain life; that God was profoundly interested in the human race and in the individual; and that he would be unto them a shepherd, a friend, a father, who would care for them, and protect them, and provide all things needful.

All through his life and climactically and dramatically at his death these convictions and faiths were scornfully and scoffingly denied. Would Jesus betray his words and his previous life by becoming a traitor to them, when all the batteries of the enemy were turned full power upon him? It is easy to believe in honesty, for instance, when it is clearly the best policy in profits and popularity, but how about our loyalty to it, when honesty costs one's possessions, or position, or threatens to bring loved ones to want and ridicule? Not one moment did Jesus falter, even when his beliefs gave every appearance of futility and failure as they led him seemingly into utter defeat and destruction.

Deserted and betrayed by friends, conscious of the perversion of his message "to make traps for fools," treated with the grossest injustice, confronted with the defeat of his cause and the

triumph of evil men, rejected, scoffed at, spit upon, suffering with no apparent advantage to anyone, forgotten, it seemed, even of God, yet he does not betray himself, even by a glance or a gesture, into the slightest deviation from the course which had brought him to such an end. If anyone was ever justified in yielding to the impulse to "curse God and die," Jesus was. But he was faithful unto death and in death.

Particularly in the death of Jesus, goodness in all its most haunting beauty and wickedness in all its most loathsome ugliness stand revealed. The disaster of sin, the black depths to which it drags its victims, is shown so unforgettably that any sensitive and sensible soul who ponders the crucifixion desires to search out sin and to hurl it from him as he would a rattlesnake or a bomb with lighted fuse. Moreover, goodness and all Christian virtues are so thrillingly embodied in glowing deed that they become the most desirable objectives in the universe.

Jesus has been exalted still more on account of what he was—vastly greater than anything that he said or anything that he did.

The world has had various geniuses who have shown, in one realm and another, the achievement of which man is capable. A master musician reveals in his melodies and harmonies and

modulations the capacity of man in music. Likewise a poet, an orator, a mechanic, a scholar partly shows in his achievements the possibilities of man in these respective spheres. These men are geniuses, we say. But Jesus was preeminently the genius that reveals not merely one particular talent or ability of mankind, but he reveals man at his greatest, in his very essence; he reveals man not merely saying this or that, and doing this or that, but man at his utmost in his innermost being, in personality, in character, in helpfulness, in sonship with God, in being perfect as God is perfect. Climaxing a perfect life with a daring death, he is Man completed in self-realization, in self-sacrifice, in devotion to the noblest and to God, in forgiveness, and love, and gentleness.

But he is even more than that in both his life and his death. He is also the distinct and unique unveiling of God. Here is one who tells much about God, and acts like God, and who also is in his being the nearest to God that we can conceive.

To many people an abstract idea means nothing, to few does it bring clear-cut comprehension. A concrete fact is needed. If we ask, "Do you believe in monogamy, in democracy, in Prohibition, in the church?" many would hesitate to make clear avowal. If, however, we ask, "Do you believe in the happiness of this home

culminating through years of loyal love, or do you believe in Abraham Lincoln, or in this sober, dependable youth, or in this noble Christian?" who would refuse immediate acknowledgment of confident belief?

In Jesus we have not merely a theory about life and about God, an abstract statement or a theological enigma; we have rather, an understandable and alluring exemplification of man at his highest achievement and of God at his clearest manifestation.

In Christ's death the loving sacrificial heart of God is demonstrated so that to see and to understand, and yet to reject, one must have a heart of stone. God is no longer seen as a capricious Oriental despot finally deigning to halt his thunderbolts and to receive his human suppliants, provided that they observe intricate etiquettes, bow low enough and often enough, and bring adequate gifts. Nor is he seen as a disinterested spectator, or as a helpless friend. He is, rather, a Father who sacrificially says with us, "our sins"; who shares with us the disastrous results of the very sins from which he has been calling us with infinite patience; who so reveals his limitless love and his matchless mercy that our heart is broken over the sins that separate us from him. He wins us to him in undying affection and recenters and remotivates our life. He touches tangled and enslaved

abilities into new powers, and energizes our capacities. To perceive God in that supreme figure on the cross is literally to be born from above; it is to hate evil, to desire goodness, to have the affections leap to God, to become a unified and eternal personality.

None of our Christologies or theories of the atonement adequately account for all this. As long as man has a mind he will attempt to account for these facts, and the explanations clarify our thinking, and even ennoble our experience. But they are at best pontoon bridges without deep-going piers. It is nothing less than tragic to insist that all the majestic truth of the cross can be confined in the elaboration of some figure of speech. Paul uses five such figures, and whole theologies have been built on an amplification of each of the five. Probably there is some truth in each theory, truth that may well be pondered. It is doubtless necessary for man to continue to try to imprison the truth in some one explanation; and it is also doubtless necessary occasionally to smash the prisons. But our living experience of God, in Jesus, of which our theories are the explanation, is the vital fact, and it should be re-experienced and re-interpreted by each generation.

Jesus makes no distinction in revealing both human and divine life. The two are indistinguishably merged. There is in him no

contrast between morality and religion. There is even a closer relationship between the two than interaction and dependence; there is unity. Holy love and loving holiness are the essential characteristics of both man and God, in the one haltingly realized, in the other perfectly.

In believing that God is like Jesus, we dare to trust that the highest to which man can aspire abides eternally and perfectly in God. Though there are many gaps in proof, and many unanswered questions, we are confident that it is more reasonable to explain the world and man in terms of goodness and love than in terms of dull chance and meaningless energy. The ultimate is not the mud out of which we are growing, but the stars to which we are yearning. We stake our all upon the present and future validity of goodness rather than upon that of badness, of Christ rather than Chaos. In seeking to attain holiness and love man is not an orphan in a hostile cosmos, a strangely born alien dreaming hopeless hopes. He is, rather, an heir who, finally attaining dissatisfaction with the swine and the husks, starts for his waiting kingdom and is met by the Father who, having waited and watched long and anxiously, impetuously runs to meet his son. When man yields to his best he enters at last into his native heath, and into God's native heath, though he may yet be forgetful and fearful and uncertain of step.

The commandments of Jesus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," are sometimes criticized as demanding impossible attainments. Love, it is said, cannot be commanded; it can only be won by one worthy of it. Therefore, to command that we love God and our neighbor is to demand a control of the affections by the will, which any practical man knows is the reverse of the usual process. The criticism fails, however, to weigh the contribution of Jesus to these commandments. True, we can but churlishly love God and our fellows if we try to compel that love. But if we perceive God in Jesus, particularly in the victorious tragedy of the cross, demonstrating that there is no agony at which God will balk to win us to eternal life and to his own self, then our love leaps to him. To see God in Christ is not merely to make love possible but also to make it inevitable. Moreover, if we comprehend and apprehend the fact that our neighbor is also embraced in God's love, that he is one "for whom Christ died," that God's forgiveness of us is incredibly greater than our forgiveness of even an enemy, then we begin to love our neighbor not merely as we love ourselves, but even to the extent that the Master directed, "as I have loved you." The command "Thou shalt love" demands not that we browbeat our affections, but that we fulfill the condi-

tions by which we attain an insight of God and man which begets unstrained love. And the generations gaining that insight through Jesus have crowned him the Christ of God and man.

"Wherefore"—that is, because "he humbled himself, becoming obedient *even* unto death, yea, the death of the cross"—"Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven and *things* on earth and *things* under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Thus generations are crowning Jesus the Christ of God, their Saviour and Master.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE CENTRAL SUN—ITS BRILLIANCE SHINES FROM GLOOM

WHETHER or not it consents to the creeds and the theologies of the church, the world recognizes the central greatness of Jesus. Except where the Good News has not been carried, or where some caricature of Jesus has been lifted up in place of him, he has drawn all men unto him. None can wander so far into the outer darkness that they fail to feel the pull of his attractiveness. But do we grasp the significance of the fact that his greatness was supremely manifested in that which is ordinarily considered belittling and disastrous to mankind, that it was manifested in terrible suffering and tragic death? Time and again, as we read and ponder the events connected with the crucifixion, realizing that Jesus clearly chose to die, we ask, "Why did God permit this?" Or, "Why did not God intervene to prevent such indignity and suffering being heaped upon the undeserving head of his Chosen One?" How the effulgence of his glory does blaze forth in experience of suffering and abuse! Jesus could have avoided death at almost any stage of the proceedings up

to, perhaps, the examination before Herod. For weeks he had clearly realized the increasing dangers that threatened him. On several occasions he had spoken about his impending death, even anticipating that he would be crucified. He had abundant evidence of the swelling hatred of the ecclesiastical and political leaders, the cooling ardor of his followers, the growing disappointment and indifference of the multitude; but instead of blunting his message, he sharpened it. There were a score of ways, which would ordinarily be called honorable, by which he could have avoided death, without resort to superhuman powers. Let him remain very quiet, shunning publicity, preaching little, and refraining from obnoxious and irritating words and acts. Or let him temporarily accommodate himself to the expectations of the multitude, without definitely encouraging them, permitting them to make their own assumptions and to revive hopes of temporal glory. Or let him appease the leaders, keeping clear of further criticism, and emphasizing some of their admirable qualities which were by no means impossible to find. Even after it was too late to escape death by these means, let him hide himself away as Elijah did, perhaps in Perea, or in the borders of Tyre or Sidon, or better yet, in the hill sections of Galilee, where friends would protect him and provide for him. Or,

again, let him thrill those followers who were yet faithful to such a pitch of reckless defense, that an enemy would need to pass over their dead bodies before they could harm a hair of their Master's head.

In a modern play someone says, "A hero is a guy that does something he wouldn't a done, if he'd stopped to think." Jesus was not that kind of a hero. He faced disaster and ignominious death with eyes open and mind clear.

He was only thirty-three years old! Only three years had been given to his message and mission! Who considers that three years is long enough to complete a life-work? A promising man cut down after completing a dozen years of professional service is mourned as one who had scarcely begun his work. Did not Jesus die prematurely, with his most glorious music unsung? One easily visions how wonderfully he might have spent forty gleaming years, teaching, preaching, healing, helping, rebuking, loving, not merely in Palestine, but also in Greece, in Egypt, in Rome.

During the last week of Jesus' life, perhaps as late as Wednesday, an unusual event presented in an alluring form an alternative to disgraceful and agonizing death. Some Greeks came to one of the apostles, Philip, and asked that they might "see Jesus." We know from the word used that they were members of the Greek

race, not merely "Hellenists"—that is, people of another race who had adopted Greek ways. They evidently were proselytes of the Jewish religion, since they had come "to worship at the feast." While their request was to "see Jesus," we may be sure that they desired more than that; they could easily have managed to see the Master, if that was all they wanted, without the intercession of the apostles. In addition, Philip would have had no hesitancy in aiding them and would have thought it unnecessary to consult Andrew, if they merely wished to get a glimpse of the Teacher. They clearly desired to interview Jesus, and perhaps to present some definite proposal to him.

Their request had considerable effect on Jesus; we are told that he said, "Now is my soul troubled." The word translated "troubled" is a strong word indicating a severe conflict of emotions and decisions. These Greeks, impressed by Jesus, opened vistas of remarkable promise. In learning and knowledge and art the people of Greece had been for centuries the leaders of the world; in political power they had now yielded to the Romans, but their culture had conquered the world, and continued its dominance. When Paul wrote a letter to the residents of Rome, he wrote in the Koinē, that Greek language of common speech which had become the world-tongue and was read even in Rome, perhaps more gener-

ally and easily than the native tongue. What possibilities opened before Jesus, if, the Jews turning against him, the Greeks would hearken to him and accept his message and mission! Could not he do more by entering this door, apparently providentially opened, than by dying in disgrace?

Jesus begins a meditation in the presence of these visitors with a phrase that would command a leaping response in the mind of anyone accepting the Grecian point of view. "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." The Greeks as a people were greatly interested in the glorified life; their search had been for exactly that objective. But the next sentence is very different, contrasting clearly with the Greek ideal; with solemn affirmation he adds, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." And then he continues: "He that loveth his life loseth it"—and who loved life more than the Greeks or sought to pack more happiness into it? "And he that hateth his life," he adds, "in this world shall keep it until life eternal. If any man serve me" (the word indicates personal attendance and not merely service at a long distance), "him will the Father honor"—who despised manual toil and menial servitude more than the Greeks? In conclusion,

Jesus adds, "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?"—this hour of suffering and of disgrace? Nay, rather, "Father, glorify thy name," whatever the cost.

Unmistakably, then, Jesus rejected this alternative to suffering and death, considering that his message and mission could effectively culminate only in this apparently desperate choice of Calvary. After mature deliberation and deep struggle, he definitely adopted, to complete his ministry, what men struggle to avoid with all their mind and strength.

"He set his face to go to Jerusalem." He did not go up to that city of his doom as a "lamb to the slaughter," piteously and impotently. There is a suggestion in that figure of the lamb, but not a complete picture. He went up as a great soul, with imperial dignity, head erect, foot-step firm, eye flashing to pour out his soul in the most glorious deed of history. We read of the apostles, "And they were on the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed." In all the three years of intimate association they never could quite understand this tender, open-faced companion, but now they found him more of an enigma than ever. Ordinarily, he was charmingly free in his association with the apostles and disciples. His heart was as wide and warm as a Western fireplace. The Gospels are full

of evidences of the familiar ease with which these companions talked with their teacher, asking intimate questions, and repeatedly interrupting his discourses. He did not need to create artificial barriers between himself and others—only little men who pose as big men need to do that. His greatness needed no inflation. But on this occasion Jesus walked ahead, aloof, alone; the apostles, reluctant to go to Jerusalem, appreciating some of the danger, strung out raggedly after him. He was unapproachable, wrapped in strange soberness and silence, intense, abstracted, oblivious, far-seeing, urgent. The apostles could not understand, and were enveloped in a nameless fear of impending disaster; they were reluctant, fearful, dismayed. He anticipated no pleasure in Jerusalem, but death in terrible form. He was to weep over the city, not with silent tears but with sobs that would wrench his frame. A saw-toothed cup, filled with bitterness, was already pressed to the bleeding lips. He was possessed, however, of a certain fierce joy because suffering and disgrace and sorrow were the means, under God, by which his victory was to be consummated.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews is a verse that brings one to a quick halt—"It became him"—that is, God—"for whom are all things and through whom are all things—to make the cap-

tain of their salvation perfect through suffering." "Perfect through suffering"! Whatever restrictions we may feel it necessary to place upon the phrase in keeping with theological predilections, let us not lose the bold truth expressed. The author certainly does mean that suffering was necessary to complete the fullness of the earthly experience of our Saviour. Without suffering something would be lacking in his human experience, and perhaps also in his personality. Can it be that suffering was necessary, then, not only for Jesus to complete his work but also to complete his own development? The suggestion is startling.

In the previous chapter we considered the greatness of Jesus as revealed both in his life and his death. The part played by his death does not need to be restated here. But the question of suffering as it relates to Jesus is part of the greater question of suffering as it relates to human beings, particularly to those who are seriously striving to do the will of God.

Stephen Olin, when president of Wesleyan University, was irritated one day by some student misdeeds and said in chapel, speaking in appealing tones, "The Almighty is grieved by this misconduct;" and then he added, in tones of thunder, "And *I* won't have it."

Why does God "have" evils and tragedies among his children? We judge an earthly

father by the condition of his children; if they are well provided for, decorous, in good health, and studious, we conclude that he is an admirable parent. Judging God by the same standards, we see too many of his children in want, in sickness, in frailties, in hatred, to rate him high in the scale of Fatherhood. We are not quite ready to exonerate him as did the Scotch dominie in the words, "God in his official capacity does many things that he is ashamed of as a private citizen." Why, then, does God allow the sins, and injustices, and ignorances and foolishness of men to produce such welter of sorrow and trouble among his children? Why does God seem to reveal, in the death of Jesus and in the tragedies of existence, so little concern?

We cannot answer the question in anything like completeness. Thomas Carlyle wrote: "To the minnow every cranny and pebble and accident of its little native creek may have become familiar; but does the minnow understand the ocean tides, the periodic currents, the trade winds, the moon eclipses by all of which the condition of its little creek is regulated and may be from time to time quite overset or reversed? Such a minnow is man; his creek, this planet earth; his ocean, the Immeasurable all; his currents, the mysterious course of Providence through æons and æons." Granting that we are

seeing "through a glass darkly," is there not some glow of light that can be cast upon the problem of suffering, that emerges so constantly and so challengingly from the events of the crucifixion which we have been pondering?

In that exalted picture of the New Jerusalem framed in the book of Revelation, a picture which would mean more to us if we were more familiar with the nomad life of the desert, we read these words: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat . . . God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." Repeatedly we find suggested and stated in the Bible, "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." It is clearly the first choice of God that man shall live in happiness and health and peace. God has given man the ability to discover for himself the laws of his own being, of human society and of his environment, but he does not compel man to search out these laws, nor, having discovered them, to live in conformity to them. Man may choose to remain in ignorance, to be careless and to refuse to follow judgment and conscience. He has the freedom to make choices which are disastrous to him and his fellows, but these choices are contrary to God's will.

God's purpose with man is evidently not to develop a species of human drones who are

supplied with free honey, or of human ants who, without choice, follow grooves of activity as instinct dictates. He evidently is not content with the goodness of inmates of prisons who, so far as external obedience is concerned, are usually letter-perfect, who have learned well the laws of their habitat and obey them with alacrity and meticulosity. God seems to desire, on the contrary, a race created enough in his own image to possess and to use a mind, a will, and a conscience. At terrific cost he has chosen to school a race of moral personalities. And the cost, terrible as it is (and let none refuse to recognize its terribleness), is none too great, when we consider the nobility of the objective to be gained.

Most of man's suffering comes from his failure to discover and to follow the laws of his being and of his environment, as God intended he should do.

Some suffering is due naturally to the limitations under which we labor in this life. Wonderful as our bodies are, they are by no means perfect instruments of the soul, if one may use a figure that must not be urged too far. Neither is our environment entirely adequate. Limitations of space, with loved ones far away; of strength, with desires far outrunning energy; of time, with conflicting duties crowding upon us; of ability, with noble purposes sadly bungled—all

these bring failure and regret and tears. If we are to be human beings and not gods, some such limitations and their resulting distresses are inevitable.

And yet by far the greatest amount of sorrow and suffering comes from failure to discover and to fit into what we call the laws of nature. These laws are not arbitrary decrees, laid down by a universal despot, but rather are the lines along which our physical and mental processes work, in which our well-being lies; they are the observed courses of those natural forces which may be either our constant friends or our uncompromising foes. Perhaps we violate these laws in ignorance, for which previous generations may be as blameworthy as we; perhaps we violate them in carelessness, which, in such interdependent civilization as ours, is kin to sinfulness; or perhaps we violate them in sin, knowing what is wise and right, and yet choosing the wrong.

In any case, the results of these violations are disastrous, and constitute by far the largest part of human suffering. The physical disasters are the same, whether the violations are in ignorance, carelessness, or willfulness; but the mental and spiritual pains are much more serious when the bad choice is made knowingly. Then chidings of conscience and remorse add their grievous plagues; in fact, many of the

sorrows of life are shorn of their agonies when they are uncomplicated by neglect or sin. For instance, "The sting of death is the law"; but coming in the normal course of existence, when the body becomes decrepit, when those who look out of one window "lose their luster," when infirmities increase, when weariness and weakness are constant, when usefulness and friends are gone and interest lost, then death is a tender mother rather than a ruthless destroyer. Particularly is this true of one who has the priceless possession of Christian confidences. If all men knew and obeyed the laws of life, death would be, in part, a triumph rather than a disaster. It would bring the sorrow of separation, but that sorrow is a naught compared to possible sorrow for any misspent days of the one who is gone, and is garlanded by flowers in the realization of the victory of the loved one.

Sin is not only the culprit directly guilty of the major portion of human tears, but it is also responsible for the fact that much distress is unrelieved.

Priests and Levites, with eyes blinded by prejudices, hearts hardened by selfishness, hands tied by trivialities, continue to pass by the wounded "on the other side." Much sorrow would be cured, and all sorrow would be relieved, if people generally had something of

the alertness to see, the deftness to help, that Jesus had.

The sympathetic are often seriously handicapped in relieving trouble by the fear that lazy and wicked people will impose upon their generosity. It is not so much that the sympathetic ask whether or not a person is worthy, since a sufferer should be helped whatever his record, and none should be considered hopeless; it is, rather, the fear that the help given may seriously harm the recipient instead of helping him, by encouraging him, for instance, in lazily and dishonestly shifting his responsibilities in life to the burdened shoulders of others. One of the qualities a person should retain through all the disillusionments of the years is the ability to be "worked"! Let one be thankful to retain a tender heart. But who is not conscious that he has withheld or even drawn back his helping hand on many occasions, for fear that he will be helping a rascal in his deviltries? Many genuinely needy are thus unbefriended.

Again, the sympathetic may fear that the one who appeals for help may be ungrateful and brutal enough to turn against his benefactor, if he be trusted too far. A man comes to your door on a black, stormy night asking for food and shelter. You doubtless give him food, but do you give him shelter? The impulse doubtless comes to you to play the part of the good bishop

in *Les Misérables,* and to offer the wearied man the best bed in your household; but even if you are willing to chance your silver plate and finally your candlesticks to him, can you quite trust him to be in the same house with your sleeping family? Knowledge of man's capacity for beastliness and brutality will probably close the door upon this unfortunate.

Sin not only causes sorrow and pain, but it is because of sin that so many hearts ache in solitude and without help. Sin brought Jesus to the cross, and it was sin that palsied the hands raised to assuage his wounds.

It is scarcely fair, however, to make this problem of suffering too simple. The most dastardly fact about pain has so far been kept out of consideration—the fact that usually the innocent suffer with and perhaps for the guilty; oftentime, because their conscience is unseared, suffering more than the guilty.

Most people are willing to "stand on my own feet," and to bear without excessive complaint the expected result of their own sins and neglects. But when tragedy comes to the innocent, we rebel. A child killed by a drunken automobile driver, a thousand workmen and their families kept in fear and in poverty by the despotism and the greed of a board of directors in a distant city, the nations hurled into war

by arrogant and greedy leaders, an aged couple reduced to poverty by the dishonesty of a stock salesman, a godly father and mother brought to heartbreak and shame by a wayward son—such wrongs, which are far too numerous, often cause sensitive people to indict God with bitterness.

Before writing too much into the indictment let us ponder the fact that sharing the results of the ignorance, the carelessness and the sins of others is only half the story; the other half is that we also share the results of the wisdom and forethought and goodness of others. When Jack falls downhill, Jill comes, it is true, "tumbling after," but when both climb the hill together they help each other over many rough and dangerous places.

We cannot eat a slice of bread, use heat or electricity, wear an article of clothing, take a drink of water, or, in fact, walk on the street, without incurring a debt to the thought and labors of hundreds of people of this and of other generations.

When the balance is cast, who is there, even among the afflicted, who is willing to forfeit the advantages and joys of our intimate and intricate human relationship, in order to escape from the disadvantages and pains of that relationship? The troubles that we share are serious, but the joys are greater. Do not denounce God

for undeserved sorrows, without also thanking him for unearned blessings.

Why, then, does not our Father God, whose kindness is like that of Jesus, right now wipe away all tears from the eyes of his children? Because he cannot do so without destroying man —that is, without destroying man as a social and moral personality. He has given man a degree of freedom, and he continues to abide by his gift. He did not blast with his lightning even those who crucified Jesus. As a result of man's misuse of this freedom, trouble and sorrow and suffering remain.

That is not all (thank God) that may be written. While the ills of human life are largely contrary to God's will, he does not leave us to welter in the sty of evil choices. He enables us to gain sweetness out of bitterness, to turn the curse into a blessing.

Paul tells us that he had learned the double secret "both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want." Both secrets are exceedingly difficult to learn; to turn both prosperity and want into benedictions is to possess a secret worth more than the magic formulas of old. Would that the people of the United States, worshiping its cult of prosperity, might realize that great benefits may come, under God's guidance, from the ills and the pains of life!

It is not easy to learn in the rough schools of adversity. There are usually at least four stages in the tugging ascent out of the pit: first, the victim is overwhelmed, speechless, in darkness and dismay; second, he sees a glimpse of light from above, and in a daze, he doggedly and almost unconsciously struggles upward; third, he conquers the bitterness of his sorrow, takes his normal place in life, regains his poise; fourth, he gains from his sorrow enlargement of understanding and sympathy.

Is this last stage possible? It is—for a Christian. Paul testifies for our "light affliction" (and Paul's "light affliction" included stonings, and beatings, and mobbings, and imprisonments, and an exceedingly troublesome "thorn in the flesh")—"worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."

*Sorrow and suffering may jolt us out of careless or sinful ways.* The prodigal son came to himself only after he was reduced to feeding swine, when no man gave to him and he was perishing with hunger. A dangerous illness, a painful accident, the desertion or death of a loved one may blast through the ice of our indifference or the rock of our sin.

*Sorrow and suffering may help us better to understand Christ and God.* Hosea in his yearning search for his faithless wife came to comprehend God's love. Jeremiah came to grasp

the realization of God's interest in the individual through national calamities. Many a parent has fathomed new depths in John 3.16, while anxiously listening to the labored breathing of a suffering child, or while standing beside a tiny white coffin. Can one comprehend God's yearning for his children until he has longed for the affection of his uncomprehending child? Can one understand most deeply God's search upon the mountainside for one lost sheep, until he has known the sorrow of the one unnecessarily vacant chair in his family circle? Can one have intelligent sympathy with the Master as he wept over Jerusalem until he has also agonized over the wickedness of his own city?

*Sorrow and suffering may increase our understanding of others and our usefulness to them.* Nydia, the blind flower girl of Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii*, found that blindness, which had brought the complaint "The living are ghosts to me," enabled her, on that fearful day when Vesuvius belched forth death, to tread her way unerringly through the darkened, congested streets, to rescue her beloved. Troubles that clearly imprison abilities may yet teach warm-hearted understanding of the sorrows of others. A saddening experience with human love that refuses prospect of hardship may yet reveal unto one more completely than ever "love that wilt not let me go."

*Sorrow and suffering may bring development in Christian character.* When these twin troubles help toward profounder understandings of God and man, and enlarge the capacity to help both, they do cause development of Christian character. But their contribution does not end here; they may aid even more directly in producing great-hearted and noble-living personalities.

Most churches possess one or two white-haired, smiling-faced saints whose Christlikeness sets a noble standard of goodness for the entire membership. The value of such people is greater than can be computed. Looking at those kindly, sunny faces one is apt to imagine that these modern saints have enjoyed sheltered lives, protected from the temptations and troubles which soil and embitter people. Otherwise it might be asked, "Whence come this gentleness and calm and confidence?" But when later we learn the story of these Christlike characters we invariably discover that "these are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Troubles and disappointments and afflictions have crowded upon them; they have known no immunity for the arrows of misfortune, but in place of immunity, God has given them something vastly greater—namely, victory. Their saintliness is the result of conquered temptations and difficulties and afflic-

tions. The strength of these conquered enemies of the soul has entered into their very being.

A veteran of the woods says that the more competent shipbuilders of other days chose their ship timbers from the north side of the trees. They selected timbers which had met and conquered the winds and the tempests at their worst, and in the struggle had grown strong. An art critic writes of Thorwaldsen, Danish sculptor, "Not to have known these were his misfortune—exile, poverty and heartbreak."

*Sorrow and suffering may become with us as well as with Christ a sacrificial revelation of the goodness and the mercy of God.*

One of the most daring verses in the Bible is Paul's declaration "Now I . . . fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ." Paul is declaring that something of the sacrificial nature of Christ's sufferings enters also in his own sufferings.

There is no doubt that the demonstration of faithful Christian living in the extremes of trouble and temptation has appealing and potent influence. Loyal followers in "Cæsar's household" give courage to Christians everywhere. The Christian who shows radiant faith in devastating sorrow, or who grows the white lily of a pure life in a muck heap, or who beats out golden wings from the hammer strokes of misfortune, proves unanswerably the power of

Christianity. Afflictions may furnish platform and sounding-board for the proclamation of Christ's benefits and thus complete what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in winning children to him.

Paul's statement plows deeper, however, than that. It clearly suggests that we may enter into the sacrificial sufferings of Jesus; that we may suffer together with a sin-stricken world in such a Christlike way that we also help to disclose the terrible sorrow that sin brings to God, the seeking, sharing love of God, the extremes to which God continually and eternally goes to win his children to goodness and to himself. With *our* stripes, also, the world may know something of God's healing. We may be so gentle, forgiving, long-suffering, and strong in affliction that we may help people to see the beauty of goodness and of God, and to turn violently from evil choices that bring undeserving tragedy, unto right choices that bring happiness to men and to God.

It is a humbling vision—for who of us are meeting sorrows and troubles in such a way that even microscopically we show the heart of God? But it is also an ennobling vision—for what can be more glorious than to enable people even through us to catch a suggestion of God's loving goodness, and to be broken-hearted over that which brings sorrow to God?

Can it be said, not so much in glittering successes as in tragic misfortune, "For me to live is Christ"? "But in everything commending ourselves, as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings"—sleeplessness—"in fastings"—starvation.

Sorrow and suffering are tragedies both to God and to us. But God, in his wisdom and mercy, which surpass understanding, asks us to let him make them sources of understanding, of growth, of usefulness. As he overruled the sin and the tragedy of the cross, so he will overrule the misfortunes of our lives. Our crosses, like the cross on Calvary, may lift him up so that he will "draw all men" unto him.

# DATE DUE

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | PRINTED IN U.S.A. |

150 mt
3/31
CINCINNATI CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
3 4320 00219 6568